

WIRE

courtney pine

iain ballarny

★

Loose Warriors

willem breuker

david sylvian

benny bailey

lydia lunch

dan barrett

British Jazz Awards 1989: be there!

COURTNEY PINE THE VISION'S TALE



EARLIER THIS YEAR COURTNEY PINE EMBARKED ON HIS MOST AMBITIOUS PROJECT

TRAVELLING TO NEW YORK, HE ENLISTED AN ALL STAR AMERICAN BAND COMPRISING THE PIANIST ELLIS MARSALIS, DELBERT FLECK ON BASS AND DRUMMER JEFF WATTS

THE RESULTS OF THOSE SESSIONS, PRODUCED BY DELBERT FLECK, ARE NOW REVEALED ON THE VISION'S TALE COURTNEY PINE'S FINEST ALBUM TO DATE

THE VISION'S TALE, AVAILABLE ON ANTILLES CD (ANC 8746) CASSETTE (ANC 8746) AND ALBUM (AN 8746)



WIRE MAGAZINE

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"I can definitely say that music won't stop.
It will continue to go forward."
CHARLIE PARKER, 1953.



COVER:

Meets
Pine
and
Ballamy
face
up
to
it.
By
Court
Jay

WIRE

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- 4 **Now's The Time** All news plus our famous columnists
- 12 **Benny Bailey** Brian Priestley greets the trumpet maestro
- 14 **LiveWire** Company, Ed Jones, Chris Connor, more
- 18 **Jazz Awards** How to get tickets
- 20 **Dan Barrett** Martin Gayford takes a slide
- 24 **David Sylvian** Meets pale, mysterious R.D. Cook
- 28 **Vladimir Estragon** Waiting for... Steve Lake
- 30 **Subscribe** Another resounding offer
- 32 **Courtney Pine/Iain Ballamy** A dialogue with Tony Herrington
- 38 **Books** Including Willie Dixon, Bud Freeman, Jess Stacy
- 40 **Lydia Lunch** Mouth resuscitated by Mike Fish
- 42 **Willem Breuker** Ben Watson goes Dutch
- 45 **Soundcheck** Miles Davis, Brass Fantasy, John Cage, more!
- 66 **The Write Place** Where readers sound off

BOULEZ-VOUS?

PIERRE BOULEZ and John Cage are the chief guests at this year's Huddersfield Festival of Contemporary Music, which runs from 16-26 November. Boulez compositions to be played include *Derive*, *Notations*, *Structures*, *Eclat*, *Multiple* and *Messias Quasi*. John Cage will be reading the text in a performance of his *Roaratorio*, based on James Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake*; while other Cage concerts will include percussion pieces (*Amores*, *Second Construction*), piano music (including the world premiere of the new *One*) and the UK premiere of his 1947 ballet music *The Sossur*. Other composers to be featured at the festival include Steve Martland, Jonathan Harvey, Frank Zappa, Frederic Rzewski, Meredith Monk, George Aperghis and Keith Volans. There will also be an EMAS tenth birthday concert and many more special events. Full details from 0484 422133, ext 20267.

AH MOON OF MY DELIGHT

THE JAZZ Lunacy festival returns to the Half Moon Theatre, 213 Mile End Road E1 for a series of concerts at the beginning of November. The full line-up is: Andy Sheppard Big Band (4 Nov); Michael Nyman's Nothing To Declare (featuring Evan Parker, Dagmar Krause, John Greaves, Henry Lowther and the Balanescu String Quartet) (5); Cassandra Wilson Trio (6); Lol Coxhill's Standard Conversions (7); Courtney Pine Band (8); Dino Saluzzi plus Iain Bal-

lamy's Balloon Man plus Mano Ventura Trio (9); line-up tba (10); Steve Williamson plus Union Dance Company (11); Mujician plus Stan Tracey Quartet (12). Here's the box office number: 01 790 4000.

TERMITE ATTACK!

LEEDS' celebrated Termite Club celebrates its second birthday this month with a weekend of inimitable fun. Opening gig features Lodestar and George Haslam/Paul Rutherford at Adelphi Hotel on 10 November; there's a lunchtime set by Mikron and the Paul Hession Group and an evening gig by Derek Bailey and Barre Phillips plus SWIG at The Packhouse (11); and the festivities conclude with a lunchtime line-up of Buckton/McMillan/Fell and Wilkinson/Walker/Hubbuck at the Adelphi (12).

FORWARD MARCHES ON

FORWARD Contemporary Music presents a series of new music concerts this month. Forward Music Nights celebrate the first anniversary of the launch of the Forward Music catalogue with four events. Compositions by, among others, Cornelius Cardew, Sean Rourke and Lol Coxhill are featured at St Matthew's Church W2 on 3 Nov; Quorum play works by Cardew, Barney Childs, Hugh Shrapnel and others on 7 Nov at Leighton House, Holland Park W14; Quartet 92 perform pieces by Ian Wilcock, Barney Childs, Michael Parsons, Bernard Hermann and Dmitri

Shostakovich on 9 Nov at Lauderdale House, Highgate Hill N6; and pianist John Tilbury has a programme of White, Smith, Rourke, Hobbs, Shrapnel, Thomson and Parsons at Blackheath Concert Halls SE3 on 15 Nov.

URBAN AND UNCLOTHED

THERE ARE a million stories in the Naked City, and just to prove it, the group featuring John Zorn, Bill Frisell, Wayne Horvitz, Joey Baron and Fred Frith will be touring this month and early in December. Here are the dates: London QE8 (28 Nov), Warwick University Arts Centre (29), Nottingham Albert Hall (30), Durham Van Mildert College (1 Dec), Cardiff tba (2), Liverpool Bluecoat (4), Sheffield Leadmill (5), Brighton Gardner Centre (6), Birmingham Adrian Boult Hall (7), Manchester RNCM (8), Leeds Trades Club (9), Leicester Haymarket (10).

MORE SAX PLEASE, WE'RE NOT BRITISH

FIVE TOP US saxophones can be heard in the UK this month: one is bebop alchemist Charles McPherson, the other four comprise the popular 29th Street Saxophone Quartet. The 29ers (Jim Hartog, Ed Jackson, Rich Rothenberg, Bobby Watson) play London Ronnie Scott's (30 Oct - 4 Nov); St Albans Maltrags Arts Centre (10); Totnes Darrington Arts Centre (11); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (13); Woolwich Tramshed (16, tbc); Edinburgh Queen's

Hall (17). Details 01 437 4967.

Charles McPherson - best-known for his work on the *Bird* soundtrack - will be playing with local trios in Yeovil College (18 November); London Bass Clef (22); Cheltenham, venue tbc (23); Brighton, venue tbc (24); Belfast, venue tbc (25); Newcastle Corner House (26); Cambridge Farmers (2 December). Further details from 061 338 2722.

JAZZ BOP TILL YOU DROP

RUSS DEWBURY and Baz Fe Jazz have teamed up to present the UK Jazz Bop Tour, which is also sponsored by 'style' magazine *The Face*. Headliner for the tour is ace organ master Big John Patton, with support including Kang Salsa, Jean Toussaint, Man Called Adam, Jackson Sloan, Snowboy and more. The dates are Brighton Top Rank Suite (3), Birmingham Mostly Dance Centre (17), London Town and Country Club (18), Leeds Astoria (20), Bristol Thekla (24), Manchester International (25).

ONE, TWO FREE TOURS

FREE MUSIC fans have two tours to savour this month: Derek Bailey and Barre Phillips play five concerts to promote their forthcoming Incus CD, while the Mujician quartet take ten. The Bailey/Phillips duo visit Manchester The Millstone (6 November, plus Those Who Celebrate); Leicester, venue tbc (7); London The Sun (9); Sheffield, venue tbc (10); Leeds Termite

Club Festival (11).

Mujician - comprising Keith Tippett, Paul Dunnall, Paul Rogers, Tony Levin - undertake a South West Jazz tour through Salisbury Arts Centre (4 November); Bradport Arts Centre (9); Acorn Penance (10); Exeter & Devon Arts Centre (11); London Half Moon Festival (12); Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre (13); Manchester Band On The Wall (16); Leicester Phoenix Arts Centre (18); Bristol Albert Inn (19); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (20). Details 0392 218368.

OUTSIDE (IN) BROADCASTS

RADIO THREE will be broadcasting several concerts from this year's Outside In Festival over the next few months. First up is the Shankar set, due for transmission at 21.30 on 30 October; this will be followed by the Geri Allen/Courtney Pine duo (22.50, 11 November) and the Michel Petruccianni trio (22.50, 25 November).

TINKLY-BONK

THE LONDON Musicians Collective is set to launch a series of concerts which aim to focus on new groups on the improvisation scene. The first gigs will be held in January-April 1990 but there's a trailer on 12 November - all at North London's Red Rose Club. Individuals or groups are invited to send in details of their work, preferably with tapes, to Richard Scott at the LMC, Diorama, 18 Park Square East, London NW1 4LH. They must arrive by the end of November.



MUHAL RICHARD ABRAMS wins the first Jazzpar award! See story below. Photo by VAL WILMER

MUHAL WINS!

AT LAST we can announce the winner of the \$25,000 Jazzpar Project Prize for 1990: the American pianist, composer and bandleader Muhal Richard Abrams has been made recipient of the award, chosen by a team of international jazz critics last spring. Muhal will conduct the Danish Radio Big Band featuring Jøakim Milder at the Prize Concert next year, and may also appear with an all-star group including John Tchicai and Pierre Dorge.

GAUDEAMUS IGITUR!

WIRE contributor Richard Barrett has been awarded the 1989 Gaudemus

Prize for his string quartet, *I Open And Close*. Barrett, 29, is the first British composer to have won the prize, which is awarded annually at the Gaudemus Music Week in Amsterdam. *I Open And Close* was originally commissioned by BBC Radio Three in 1988.

ON TOUR: MCLAUGHLIN, GRIMES

GUITARIST JOHN McLaughlin brings his trio to the UK this month for a tour that takes him to Cheltenham Town Hall (26); London RFFH (27); Torquay English Riviera Centre (28); Cambridge Corn Exchange (29); Manchester RNCM (30); Edinburgh Queen's Hall (1 December).

Details from 01 437 4967. Meanwhile, singer Carol Grimes leads her sextet, Eyes Wide Open, on a Jazz Services tour to London Shaw Theatre (12 November); York Arts Centre (13); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (14); Nottingham Old Vic (15); Hayes Beck Theatre (19); Brighton Gardner Arts Centre (21). Details 01 829 8354

ASKO ME ANOTHER

TWO TOURS on the Contemporary Music Network will appeal to contemporary classical cats this month. From Holland, ASKO arrive to play a programme of Stockhausen, Boulez, Varese and Xenakis. Dates: London QEH (16 Nov), Manchester RNCM (17), Durham Trevelyan College (18), York University (22), Cardiff St David's Hall (23), Huddersfield St Paul's Hall (25), Birmingham Adrian Boult Hall (26).

And from Hungary come the remarkable all-percussion ensemble Amadinda, who are touring with James Wood. Dates: London QEH (2 Nov), Oxford Arney Hall (3), Leicester Phoenix Arts Centre (4), Winchester Theatre Royal (5), Cheltenham Pump Rooms (7), Manchester RNCM (11), Newcastle Playhouse/Tyne Theatre (12), Sheffield Leadmill (14), Huddersfield St Paul's Hall (17).

XMAS IS COMING...

PLEASE NOTE that all tour news and club dates for our special Xmas double-issue - which will cover December and January - should arrive at the office before 1 November.

Ambleside <i>Zeffirelli</i> (0966 3345)	(0232 340391)	Nottingham <i>Narrowboat</i> (0602 706983)	Alan Skudmore Qrt	3	Red Rose Club N7
Geri Allen, Charlie	Dino Saluzzi	8	Human Chain	4.5	(01 263 7265)
Haden, Paul Morian	Alan Barnes	9	York <i>Arts Centre</i>		Conspiracy, Sigma
Chameleon	2 Frevo	11	Rutherford	18	Ronnie Scott's W1
Barnet <i>Old Bull Arts Centre</i> (01 449 0048)	12 Heavy Quartet	17	Old Vic (0602 419741)		(01 439 0747)
Noel McCalla's Contract	Roadside Picnic	25	Slav To The Rhythm!		Joe Pass
Philip Bent Qnt	St David's Hall (0222 371236)		Jazz Garden	1	Macon Montgomery
Bath <i>Paradise</i>	19 Lionel Hampton	1	Harriott Memorial Qnt	8	Arturo Sandoval
Paco De Lucia	Colchester <i>Arts Centre</i> (0206 577301)	Oxford <i>Jericho Tavern</i>	LONDON		Rosemary Branch N1
Belfast <i>on the</i>	In Caboots	Jon Lloyd Qrt	Bass Clef N1 (01 729 2476)		(01 226 6110)
Andy Sheppard Sextet	Pete King Qrt	Paisley <i>Arts Centre</i>	Bobby Shew	1.2	Nancy
Berthamstead <i>Civic Centre</i> (044 27 73264)	Roadside Picnic	3	Conjunto Fuego		Royal Academy Of Music
Mullen/Weller Qnt	Dartford <i>Julia Mullen</i>	9	Cayenne	19	NW1 (01 935 5461)
Birmingham <i>Cannonhall</i>	12 Bukky Leo Trio	23	Masquerade		Harriott Memorial Qnt
George Haslam/Paul	Mervyn Africa		"Pazato" Valdez Group	30	Royal Festival Hall SE7
Rutherford	Jim Mullen	1	Blow The Fuse N1		(01 928 8800)
Brentwood <i>Morley's Club</i> (0277 218897)	Edinburgh <i>Queen's Hall</i> (031 6602019)	8	Accordians Go Crazy	2	Shoebbox SE24 (01 674 9734)
Harriott Memorial Qnt	5 Andy Sheppard Big Band	15	Di's New Outfit	9	Jim Mullen
Tim Garland w/Breeze	12 Lancaster <i>offshoot</i> (0524 35193)	2	BMIC W1 (01 499 8567)		Ian Ballantine
Bridport <i>Arts Centre</i> (0308 27183)	Lodestar	9	Bull's Head SW13 (01 876 5241)	21	Harry Beckitt
Hard Lines	10 Leicester <i>Phoenix Arts Centre</i> (0533 555627)	11	Hard Lines	38	Dave O'Higgins
Brighton <i>Comrade</i> (0273 606460)	George Haslam/Maccio	Sherborne <i>Swan Inn</i> (0935 813789)	Half Moon E1 (01 790 4900)		Tabernacle W11 (01 968 8806)
Harriott Memorial Qnt	17 Marcos	Andy Sheppard Big Band	Bukky Leo Qnt, Claude		Dudu Pukwana's Zila
Bristol <i>Allent Inn</i> (0272 661968)	Lincoln <i>Constitutional</i> (0522 23700)	25 Sunderland <i>Empire Theatre</i> (091 5142517)	Dezza Tuo	19	Mervyn Africa
Hard Lines	5 Alan Skudmore Qrt	Lionel Hampton	Jazz Cafe N16 (01 359 4936)		Bukky Leo
Ed Jones Qrt	12 Luton <i>Arts Centre</i> (0582 419584)	4 Swindon <i>Leak Centre</i> (0793 871212)	Mervyn Africa Qrt		Roadside Picnic
Heavy Quartet	Sylvia Halliett	25	Harriott Memorial Qnt	5	University College
Old Vic (0272 250250)	Maidstone <i>Old Stables</i> (089282 2254)	Walsall <i>Adamsall</i>	6 Billy Jenkins	6	School Hampstead
Cambridge <i>Arts Theatre</i> (0223 355246)	Peter King Qrt	Conrad Herwig	B Shops For The Poor	7	Harriott Memorial Qnt
Annette Pescok	4 Frevo	12 Warminster <i>Old Bull</i> (0985 218319)	Roland Ramon Band	12	Vortex N16 (01 254 6516)
Cardiff <i>Core Exchange</i> (0223 357851)	Manchester <i>Band On The Wall</i> (061 8341786)	Hard Lines	Jazz Against Apartheid	13	Conrad Herwig Qrt
Paco De Lucia	14 Ian Bellamy Qrt	Wavendon <i>Stables</i> (0908 583928)	DHSS	18	John Enderidge Project
Flemish (0223 62530)	Charlie Byrd	23 Sue Shattock/Terry	Tony Marsh Trio	19	Mervyn Africa Qrt
Ian Bellamy/Django	Newcastle <i>Corner House</i>	Dusley Band	Dudu Pukwana Qrt	21	George Haslam/Paul
Bates Qrt	3 (091 265 9602)	Charlie Byrd	Ian Shaw	23	Rutherford
Jean-Pierre Labadie Qrt	24 Jim Mullen	8 Wells <i>Festival</i> (0328 710130)	Ed Jones Qnt	24	Elton Dean/Howard
Cardiff <i>Four Ball Inn</i>	Harriott Memorial Qnt		Prince Of Orange SE16		Riley
			Hard Lines	7	Human Chain
			Chameleon	13	Lol Coxhill
			Queen Elizabeth Hall SE1		Evan Parker Trio
			(01 928 8800)		Sean Tracey/Art Themen
			John Adams/London		Watermans Arts Centre
			Sinfonietta	28,24	<i>Brentford</i> (01 847 5651)
					Steve Williamson Qnt

A new push for STEVE MARTLAND's Festival of Contemporary Music and its soundtrack. Photo by NEIL DRABBLE.



the
sound
of
africa

by Mark Smiley

AT ONE time the BHUNDU BOYS, Zimbabwean musicians of minor repute (whatever they said), looked set for some kind of guest-spot dominance of Brit indie pop. But after two lauded LPs on the riny label Discafrique, their first LP for the multinational leisure industry (*True Jit* WEA XS129) was a disappointment — for their fans in content, for them in sales. Its reception signalled a hiccup in the flow of their progress. They'd lost their brash one-note innocence.

In retrospect, *True Jit* is clearly an advance on both the earlier records (both have a rather tiresome one-pitch production which flattens all the songs towards one sound, and one — *Tsvimbudzemoto*, Discafrique AFRI LP 03 — is anyway no more than a retrospective assemblage disguised as new material). With Warners behind them, they tried to open up their music to the full resources of the modern studio: the result was softer, shyly attractive, light.

The somewhat specious image the World Music lobby has of itself as the battling political underdog — all integrity and resolve — is easily aroused. Faced with the intelligent self-made compromises the Bhundus were embarked on, the curators of Real Music turned on their mini-heroes, dismissed them as dupes of global pop, and savaged Warners, evil overseers of an ugly seduction blah blah blah.

Pamberi (WEA WC132) is the first Bhundu-move since then. It's very assured — a better synthesis of the international soft-funk *lingua franca* with *mbira*'s tumbling guitar lines than anything before them — and they're certainly articulating mood much more succinctly than before. Their music's grown to fill out the expectations people originally had of them — they're now as good as the people who first raved about *Shabini* (Discafrique AFRI LP 02) were claiming — and it belongs here as much as in Harare.

I don't think they escape the creeping humanist blandness of World Music — it's inherent at this stage of pop's history, and the alternatives are either uncritically tolerated market segmentation (giving the people what they want, taste by taste) or full-on Kopian *avant garde* challenge (unapologetically parochial and anti mass-appeal, from African Dawn to Non). But they're the first dance-pop group from non-Francophone Africa to achieve anything at the level they have done (Paris is of course teeming with analogous operations), and they managed it, I think, by being young and basically unformed — by being flexible enough to incorporate Western studio sound *inside* their project.

Pop matters when groups become signs of something wider — the Bhundus, with their background adoration of The

Beatles, are the sign of the first genre-fusion between the 60s Britwave (with all its attendant transworld resonance) and its displaced Anglo-African equivalents. That's not much, at this stage, but it isn't nothing.

amen
corner

by Nick Kimberley

IN 1960, after a brief career as the "Wonder Boy Preacher", SOLOMON BURKE signed for Atlantic Records. At his first session for the company, he sang "Just Out Of Reach", a country tear-jerker brimming with easy emotion. Burke wasn't the first black singer to record country and western, but he was perhaps the first to bring the cimbres of Afro-American church singing to a country tune.

Within 18 months of "Just Out Of Reach", Ray Charles, who had played hillbilly music in the 40s, had sold a million copies of "I Can't Stop Loving You", setting the dominant tone for his career over the next quarter of a century. Charles's battered and all-but-broken voice came closer than Solomon Burke's to the straining style of white country singers like Hank Williams and Lefty Frizzell.

Both Charles and Burke were recording in the North. It was in the Southern States that the blending of soul and country had the most effect. Jon Tex was one black southerner who liked a hint of the cowboy about him. His best records from the 60s often included a spoken homily whose philosophical and oratorical style owed much to the sermons Hank Williams recorded as Luke the Drifter — but they were still recognisably soul. As the recent release of *Stone Soul Country* (Charly) demonstrates, when Tex turned more deliberately country, the results were less convincing. Several of the songs here were also recorded by Solomon Burke: like him, Tex relied on a voice too sweet and loose for pure country songs.

With PERCY SLEDGE, the problems are more acute. His 1983 country album, only now released, *Wanted Again* (Demon) employs C&W instrumentation, even down to the steel guitar. While the first response is amazement that voice has changed so little since the 60s, it's soon clear that Percy simply isn't cut out for Hank Williams songs: he sounds too innocent.

Wanted Again was recorded at the same studio Sledge worked in during the 60s. For a more convincing demonstration of how that studio could weld together country and soul, turn to the recent anthology *The Deep South* (Kent), and listen to TONY BORDERS' 1968 recording of "Cheaters Never Win",



shot through with country's paranoid mistrust of marital harmony. But even if most of the musicians (excluding the singer) were white, every detail of the sound is black soul music. The essence of Southern Soul isn't simply a matter of grafting a white idiom onto a black style. For all their pleasures, the Joe Tex and Percy Sledge country albums show it's more enigmatic than that.

ancestral voices

IF DUSTING off your Woodstock triple deckers this summer afforded no satisfaction, help is at hand. The Munich-based col legno label (dedicated to premiere recordings of modern and contemporary works) has produced the festival set to end all festival sets, six CDs (0647 285-290) of live recordings from the 1988 International Music Festival in Leningrad.

by Brian Morton

col legno are already known as champions of the West German FRANZ HUMMEL (not to be confused with the early 19th century keyboard bore) whose violin concerto "Archaeopteryx" kicks off volume one to great effect. The Soviets are strongly in evidence, led by SCHNITTKE and the marvellous SOFIA GUBAIDULINA and there's a generous representation from both Germans, most strikingly WOLFGANG RÜHM's "Wolff-Liederbuch" for baritone and orchestra, an ironic backward glance typical of an overall retreat from modernism.

One representative each from Japan (AKUTAGAWA), Italy (LOMBARDI), Spain (CERVELLO) and the USA (JOHN ADAMS' "Harmonielehre"), but the virtue of the collection really is the post-glasnost *entree* into the still-uncharted world of Soviet-bloc composition. There's even an (Alexander) TCHAIKOVSKY, the lovely Pavane for Five Violas, in its first performance. German CDs are still the best there are and any quibbles about the live register are made up for by the warmth of response in a notoriously unyielding medium.

ARVO PÄRT is around to remind us that glasnost may be too little and a touch too late. After this summer's BBC Prom, I was suggesting that ECM might do well to record Pärt's pre-"conversion" Third Symphony. BIS have beaten them to it with a Neeme Järvi-conducted set of early work, the "Polyphonic" Symphony No 1, its two successors, the Cello Concerto "Pro Et Contra" and a Perpetuum Mobile. "Early" Pärt is disconcertingly serial; in the mid-60s, he was a relatively conventional avant-gardist, though it's nice to be able to read back into these pieces some of the characteristic devices —

diatony, stasis — that seem on the surface a complete antithesis and overturning of his original neoclassical stance.

The American composer VIRGIL THOMSON died on 30 September. He might just be remembered more for his reviews than for his music, but there is *4 Saints In 3 Acts* and *The Plough That Broke The Plains* to be thankful for. Even at the end of his life, Virgil is still leading us through the "moronic inferno".

into the dark

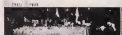
MOST FILM music is the confirmation of a lifetime's habits, a common denomination of musical codes that we decipher. All film music addresses one of two things, either *time* or *movement*. Both are rendered by music as passing phenomena, so our interest in elements like the *plot* is based as much on our immersion in passing time, and its calibration through music, as it is concerned with the films' characters.

by Russell Luck

This punctuation of *time* and *movement* is at its most intense with the manic incorporations of cartoon music, punctuation 'on the beat'. ALAN SILVESTRI's *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (Touchstone Records) is a great example. A full orchestral score segued and counterpointed with speed nearing indignity, BERNARD HERMANN's rhe considered model here, though given a surreal inflexion through Silvestri's inventive use of overlay. (Forthcoming from Varese, a 4CD set of Hermann's entire Decca Phase 4 recordings.)

Somewhere out there in buff-land, perhaps debates rage furiously over 'hot' issues like "Medieval Music in Late 80s Cinema"; if so, then consider the soundtracks to *The Navigator* (Silva Screen) and *The Last Temptation Of Christ* (Real World) — now more succinctly issued as *Passion*. It boils down to authenticity vs affect, a probably insoluble dilemma. PETER GABRIEL's solution with *Passion* is to bypass the western museum of musical reference, and to opt for a stab at 'realism', which comes out as an ether of electronically distilled world music. Despite its brave ambitions it arrives fully formed as a Peter Gabriel project. It is therefore subject to the same problems of individualism and celebrity that beset MARTIN SCORSESE in his approach as director to a film that is itself an investigation of personality. TABRIZI's score to *The Navigator* confronts the scape of 14th century Cumbria. Combining Celtic folk music with traditional plainsong, the overall structure is perhaps a little too consciously cinematic in parts, yet it remains one of the year's more appealing scores.

VENTURE RECORDS PROUDLY PRESENT



Michael Nyman's music for the controversial new Peter Greenaway film 'The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover'.

The album is composed & conducted by Nyman & performed by The Michael Nyman Band & London Voices.

"A composer of substance & significance"
GRAMOPHONE



Volume One of Seigen Ono's music for the Comme Des Garçons' fashion shows, recorded in Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro & New York.

The album features contributions from John Zorn, Bill Frisell, Arto Lindsay, John Lurie & many more.

"Music not so much for the present but of the future"
MUSIC & MUSICIANS

A limited edition four LP/CD/Cassette boxed set entitled 'The Nyman/Greenaway Projects', featuring music from 'The Draughtsman's Contract', 'A Zed & Two Noughts', 'Drowning By Numbers' & 'The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover' will be available in December.

The Michael Nyman Band will perform music from all four films at The Queen Elizabeth Hall on January 5th & 6th 1990. Details from the box office.



AVAILABLE ON COMPACT DISC, LP & CASSETTE FROM ALL GOOD RECORD SHOPS

Benny Bailey •

big brass

The little master of the trumpet

Back to Brass Presley in New York.

Photo by Nick White.

"THE BIGGEST thrill, I guess, was working with Dizzy, because it was so new at the time. Everything was so exciting, you know, it was like a whole new approach to the trumpet."

Not Dizzy's big band of 1989, of course, but Benny Bailey was talking about joining Gillespie in 1947. He was just 22 and just in time to be part of the trumpet section on such landmark records as "Manteca" and "Cubana Be - Cubana Bop".

The inspiration which prepared him for this chance when it came was listening to Bird and Miles Davis on the West Coast, where Benny was based in the mid-1940s. "Everything was happening out there. Bird was there, and he was like a magnet for all the young musicians. They'd try to follow him around, and try to find where he *might* appear. We'd hear a rumour that he might show up for a jam-session, we weren't sure, so we'd go anyway. He used to come in and play one number, maybe two numbers, and he'd split. I learned so much just by him playing one number, his way of inverting the harmonies and using substitute chords. I had to go and ask Miles, 'What is happening?' Miles told me quite a lot, actually."

Benny says all this in an excitable, slightly hoarse voice that, as well as paralleling his unique trumpet style, sounds uncannily like the voice of Red Allen (apart from the lack of a New Orleans accent). Bailey originates from Cleveland, which he describes as "a trumpet town" because of the influence of legendary Freddie Webster. Webster, who made pitifully few records and died young, was special for two things in Benny's judgement. "Sound and phrasing. Actually Miles got a lot of his phrasing from Freddie, because they were very close. The solo that Miles plays on the [Parker] record of 'Now's The Time' or 'Billie's Bounce' - I forget which one - is a Freddie Webster solo exactly, note for note. Of course, Freddie's sound was much bigger, he had a lot of vibrato, but the phrasing was the same."

The other experience which had a telling effect was that Benny's stint with Dizzy started also just in time for the European tour of 1948. One of the broadcasts from that tour, now on album, is called *Bebop Enters Sweden* (Dragon) and Benny still recalls the two-way impact. "The people were so open and receptive, I decided to come back to Europe somehow, even if I had to hitch-hike!" Taking the expatriate

route almost ten years before Dexter Gordon made it trendy, Bailey settled first in Sweden, then in Germany, for a full quarter-century.

During this period he spent more than a decade as a sessionman with radio studio groups. "After a while it becomes boring, it's like an office job actually. At first it was a challenge, I learned discipline. Playing with the big bands, you didn't need that much discipline because you played the same music every night." He also became typecast as a section-leader, which bore fruit particularly with the all-star Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland get-togethers. "It was almost forced on me. Quincy Jones made the comment, 'You'd make a good lead-player if you like it', but I never wanted to play lead. It's too much responsibility. I like to do different things different times, and the lead player always has to do the same thing all the time. You know, he can't afford to get too high before the gig, he's got to get his sleep . . ."

Benny's one trip back to the States during his European era was, though, thanks to Quincy and resulted in the splendid septet album *Big Brass* (Candid). "The only disappointment was Quincy promised to write the whole record date for me, but he was always so busy running around, having a ball, till he didn't have time. The best thing on the record is the one where there's no arrangement, 'Kiss To Build A Dream On' " (a number associated with Bailey's childhood idol, Louis Armstrong). Just recently, he recorded "Little Jazz" in tribute to Roy Eldridge, who was still living at the time, as was the most contemporary recipient of Benny's accolade. "I like Woody Shaw, he's the only guy that came along with a different approach."

The new Bailey album, *For Heaven's Sake* (Hot House), was done in London and the trumpeter insisted on sharing the front-line with Tony Coe, an association that's also a spin-off from the Clarke/Boland days. "I knew he would fit perfectly into this, interpreting the different styles of music. I don't want to be just classified as a bebop player, because music is too broad. The longer I play, the more I'm trying to get looser. I try to create something according to the tune that I'm playing, instead of playing licks. If you study music, you're much freer, actually. There's a lot of guys, they play by ear and they're limited but, if you know the harmonies, you never run out of ideas."



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Company

LONDON
OLD BULL ARTS CENTRE &
PURCELL ROOM

COMPANY 89 began on a Thursday evening in High Barnet before an audience of 19. It finished on Sunday night with 70 plus in attendance. When it is a matter of witnessing the alchemy of musical innovation – staring at the test tubes in the laboratory – audience figures are irrelevant. What is discovered will be put to use, whether it packs the halls at the time or not.

The first measures were staggeringly brilliant, lending credence to (absent) founder Derek Bailey and his proposition that the encounter of unheeded musicians generates a special electricity. Steve Noble's clear percussion set up the eruptive skyscraper vertigo belated of post-Varese modernism; Peter Kowald on upright bass swung the music into three dimensions with rattling, delayed notes; Co Streiff's lurching, Ayleshish alto spoke with emotional authority; Peter Casack's guitar gave a taste of no wave aggression; Connie Bauer slouched the auditorium in fiery trombone while Phil Durrant's electronics bubbled acidly in the spaces. It was that good. It is not surprising that avantgarde musicians should hear in the same way, but the momentum and power of this instant orchestra was breathtaking.

There is a new spirit of co-operation in the playing, a willingness to evolve textures rather than engage in ceaseless undercurrent dialogue. With Derek Bailey or Lol Coxhill

this merciless method has its own rewards, but it is fascinating to watch a new set of improvisers move on from what the Americans call "ping-pong" music. It requires trust and confidence: these players are not paranoid about referential music. Parist it is not.

As the five concerts proceeded, new musicians were added to the starting six. Andres Boshard, manipulating cassettes and a computer, started unpromisingly in a trio with Durrant and Casack (both on electronics themselves). Effects rubbed shoulders, but guitars strumming over wacer effects sounded more Enya than Iskra. A duet between Kowald and Zeena Parkins on harp seemed to win the case for regular improvisation: musicians at the peak of instrumental technique grappling in heated, uncidy, passionate dialogue. Parkins has a lot of Bailey's spikiness, peering out from behind her harp strings like a William Gibson goth about to lob an atomic nuclear device. Kowald right on top of her notes. Steamy stuff.

Later on, Boshard redeemed himself with a lavish display of classic Stockhausen-like jet roars that responded beautifully to Co Streiff's charged yet limped sax. A relief, because the soundworld of electronics needs to be recruited for improvisation if the latter is to avoid relegation to chamber tastefulness. A climactic encounter between Noble, Kowald and Parkins with New York singer Shelley Hirsch was the week's high-point: Kowald excavating continents with his bass, Hirsch so triumphantly free in her transitions – opera to loudmouth, gurgles to scat – that it seemed as if she could swallow the music, reduce all the sound to her own lips and throat. As a dazed punter put it – Wow!

Sunday-only arrival of pian-

ist Alex Maguire gave everyone a chance to extend the two extremes of improvisation: varied, *Pierrot Lunaire*-style randomness and jazz/blues gutter boogie, he can support musicians everywhichway. During the all-in finale Co Streiff stepped forward to deliver a plangent, directed solo that was astonishingly brave in its commitment to free jazz logic. The way it helped the others move the music – Maguire coming, Kowald swinging – made the "anti-jazz" improvisation arguments seem cramped and distorting. Maguire then led it out into atonal twinkles and Boshard unleashed the sound of a quasar imploding, Connie Bauer and Parkins using horn and harp to find, hilariously, Wagner in the roar.

The sensual rush of this music is only matched by the acuteness with which it questions conventional categories. Organisers Durrant, Noble and Casack are to be credited with invoking a spirit and militancy I cannot remember since the early '80s.

BEN WATSON

Chris Connor

LONDON
PIZZA ON THE PARK

I DIDN'T really believe it either, but here she was, Chris Connor singing in London for what turned out to be a three-week season at this sympathetic and relaxed venue. A set I caught early on in the residency was beautifully handled by the singer. Most young would-be jazz vocalists still come on as *recherché* torch singers and believe they can get the style down cold just by lagging behind the beat and over-embellishing the lyrics. They should go and hear Chris Connor.

Her hair is silver and white

now, and she's rather careful about making her way to the stage, but her voice is unmistakably the rich instrument of the Atlantic albums that once went some way towards defining the jazz singer's manner. Her sets are intense from start to finish: she's not a lightly swinging vocalist. She hammers down on fast numbers, cruises on a controlled vibrato at mid-tempo, and takes ballads at a pace which says that she has nothing but time and can treat it as she pleases.

Perhaps there were traces of a fallibility which attends any singer past the stage where it all comes as easy as breathing: she barked some lines instead of gliding through them, and occasionally a tempo would sound too hurried for comfort. Her more limited range, though, is turned to her advantage. At the moments where she moved out of the husky contralto register, it illuminated a line with unexpected candour.

Though the two Contemporary albums have mixed standards with more modern material, most of her set was based in the finest vein of American songwriting. Connor trusts a lyric, a trait which too many singers let slip, and she would sometimes pause halfway through a line just to note some fraction of a phrase – and do it without destroying the musical flow. "The Thrill Is Gone" and an incomparably tender "The More I See You" were like that; Cole Porter's "Lover" was, by contrast, snapped out with infectious fun. "Blame It On My Youth" has been a Connor specialty for 30 years, and the irony of the lyric has become moving as she herself has grown older.

But the most compelling treatment was her reading of Rodgers and Hart's "My Heart Stood Still". She murmured the exquisite verse – "A house in Iceland was my heart's

Two's Company. PETER CUSACK and PHIL DURRANT jamming along. Photo by HOWARD SOOLEY.



doman/I saw your smile, now castles rise in Spain" – and turned the chorus into a gathering drama which silenced the room.

RICHARD COOK

Johnny Griffin Joe Henderson

LONDON
RONNIE SCOTT'S

THE APPEARANCE of two tenor greats in consecutive weeks was part of the 30th anniversary programme at Ronnie's, and stylistically the most straightforward part. Fittingly both have performed these several times before, Griffin first of all back in 1963 and Henderson first in 1968. Although for much of the intervening period American visitors have tended to bring their own groups, this time (either for reasons of economy or nostalgia) both Griffin and Henderson were backed by the house team of John Critchinson, Ron Matthews and Martin Drew.

Griffin plays helter-skelter, whether the basic tempo of the piece is fast or slow, and it takes a while to realise again how well-constructed (and how melodic) his lines are. Much of the vocabulary is straight out of Bird (more so than any other tenor saxist) but often busier than Bird, relief being provided by the frequently nutty quotations à la Dexter and the occasional tonal distortions à la rhythm-and-blues. The description makes Griff sound like a compilation album, but this is a homogeneous and very personal style which he has been perfecting long enough not to change it now. And, despite the harmonically interesting originals such as "Woe Is Me" and "Take My Hand", it actually works best of all on the standards.

Henderson (nine years youn-

ger, to the day) opened with his own near-standard "Recorda-Me" followed by the similarly semi-modal "Invitation", both done at a healthy fast-medium, and the material highlighted a certain lack of memorability, even of fluency sometimes. Rather than Bird, Joe plays homage to Rollins a lot of the time while his gruff tone, though now highly recognisable, is one that Sonny tried ages ago and discarded. The second set began with an extremely long and fast "Lover" (maybe trying to prove something to Jean Toussaint who was in the house?) which became less and less interesting as he went on. Perhaps just not a good night.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

Icebreaker

LONDON
SHAW THEATRE

PERHAPS IT WAS a little over-enthusiastic to present two concerts by this group at the Shaw on consecutive Mondays. The programming overlapped to an extent, which was OK in a way, but the final feeling was of a brave effort diluted in this instance by its own ambition. Which was a pity, as Icebreaker have taken more than a little care to make their subject matter accessible without downgrading or trivialising it.

The band itself, though, seemed ambivalent as to its true identity. Much of the programme seemed to be given over to establishing Icebreaker as a kind of successor to the now-disbanded Dutch group Hokerus, the group assembled during the formative work on (and named for) what may be Louis Andriessen's best-known piece, which was performed at both concerts. Two identical ensembles – including panpipes, alto sax, pianos, bass

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and congas – play identical chords in turn with minimal (ist) extensions which build into a kind of well-organised frenzy. The effect is one of suspense, but it's a suspense which has the hardened minimalist smirking quietly in anticipation of The Cathartic Change upon which many of the more energetic minimalist compositions seem to hinge. In the case of "Hokerus" it comes in the form of a coda of fixed duration, the length of the preceding sections being at the discretion of the ensemble's director. The effect is at least mutable; in the case of Icebreaker's two versions, exciting in the first version, over-stretched and self-defeating in the (extended) second version.

Other than this, we got a condensed but well-ordered tour of some of the more blood-stirring areas of minimalism. An empathetic version of Reich's "Octet", a very effective and well-balanced performance of Michael Gordon's "Acid Rain" – though with much of the work's abrasiveness developing onto the strings, Icebreaker's guitarist eschewing the penetrating clangs favoured on the recorded version – and the unexpectedly discordant "Think Slow, Act Fast" by Michael Nyman. James Poke and Peter Garvey contributed some interesting if less self-assured compositions. Diderik Wagenaar's piece explained why he was described in the programme notes as employing "a superficially anti-expressive idiom to expressive ends". Yes, he is a noisy bugger, but what can you do when you're trying to attract the supposedly fickle attention of The Crossover Audience without

causing it to cross over to the pub?

TOM CORBIN

Ed Jones Quintet

LONDON
BASS CLEF

ED JONES has grown as a tenor saxophone player alongside Stoke Newington's Jazz Café. His bright, infectious music echoes that venue's pioneering combination of chic and cheerful. Here, at the Bass Clef – a larger, funkier, more ramshackle venue – the audience was small but attentive.

Ed Jones' fluent hard bop takes on board aspects of 60s freedom and world music without asking the musicians to paint pictures outside their frame of reference (no ethnic pastiche). The gearchanges are beautifully handled: it is a fine-tuned band. Geoff Williams is a firecracker of a pianist: on his "No Difference" he well nigh exploded with a kind of pop/ragtime Cecil Taylor, and his chords continually feed an 'out' beavard to the soloists. Electric bassist Rob Starham sounds as if he has a rock background. His tone is not great, but his speed and virtuosity serve the band well. Winston Clifford – a drummer with real fire and wallop – thrives on his playing, absorbing the felicitous into a rhythmic drive that allows no jazz-rock self-regard.

Even during some Euro-impressionist soprano, Clifford's power and interaction made for mobility and interest, and a bearbox urgency during "This Is Jazz" extracted some soulful tenor from Jones. Untroubled by academicism, there's an element of cartoon-Trane in Ed Jones' light, snappy approach. Jones has created something pressured and glittering from his sources: his peppy, epicurean music deserves a lot of attention.

BEN WATSON



NOVUS



Christopher Hollyday - Christopher

Hollyday Hollyday is unquestionably an astonishing technician even by 1989 standards.....*Wire* **Chet Baker - Lets Get**

Lost He sings and plays through some painfully sad tunes including "Everytime we say goodbye", and culminating in a pole, torn version of Elvis Costello's "Almost Blue". You can't help but take it as a tearful summation and as an epitaph for a very tragic life.....*Q* **James Moody - Sweet**

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'bone

Is this dashing young man

the new emperor of trad

trombone? Or will he shirk

into obscurity? Interview

by Martin Gayford

Photos by Mark Dunst

• Dan Barrett

apart

AN UGLY duckling of an instrument, the trombone needs propitious circumstances as well as skill and imagination if it is to turn into a musical swan. The New Orleans tailgate style was limited, if vigorous; while the fast tempos and chromatic runs of bop seem unsuited to the nature of the horn – even the best players of the JJ Johnson school are inclined to sound, in Whitney Balliett's words, "like a fat man trying to run uphill".

In between, however, there was a period when the trombone was used, as suits it best, melodically; and a school of players flourished – including Miff Mole, Jimmy Harrison, J C Higginbotham, Jack Teagarden, Lawrence Brown, Dicky Wells, Benny Morton, Tricky Sam Nanton, Sandy Williams, and Vic Dickenson – who were so different from each other, and each so excellent in their individual way, that it is hard to put one above another.

This melodic strain in trombone playing was carried into modern jazz by a succession of splendidly maverick musicians – Bill Harris, Jimmy Knepper, Bob Brookmeyer and Roswell Rudd among them – and is detectable in such contemporary exponents as George Lewis. None the less, with the deaths in the early 80s of Dickenson, Wells and Morton, the conversational accents of swing trombone itself seemed to be disappearing from the world as ineluctably as the song of the whale.

Consequently, I was much cheered a couple of years ago to discover that a young American player called Dan Barrett had taken up this endangered style. Barrett's two LPs, *Strictly Instrumental* and *Swing Street* (the second by a working quintet he co-leads with the guitarist Howard Alden) were encouraging. Both feature light and tightly-arranged music in the manner of the sharp little bands Teddy Wilson led in the 30s, but with an open-minded repertoire that stretches from James P Johnson to Parker and Monk.

Barrett himself at different times shows affinities with a number of his predecessors: he has something of Teagarden's forthright open tone, Lawrence Brown's extraordinary creaminess and Vic Dickenson's donnish drollery. When he plays valve trombone, there is a hint of Bob Brookmeyer; with a plunger mute he approaches the unforgettable sound – at once primitive, plaintive and absurd, like a melancholy troll – that made Tricky Sam Nanton such an important part of Duke Ellington's orchestral palette. Through all the performances, however, runs a fluent, even-tempered quality that is his alone. This was not dusty musical archaeology, but successful conservation of a threatened, but still living form.

When Barrett and Alden appeared in London last August, I went along to hear them. That night, before his first set at the Pizza Express, we sat in the airing cupboard-sized dressing



room and talked both about his career and about the trombone in general.

BARRETT, WHO is in his early 30s, turned out to be the picture of a trombonist. For some reason, different instruments tend to attract different physical types. Thus, trumpet-players are very often pint-sized and full of pep; while trombonists are often a size larger and unhurried in manner and movement. Barrett is out of that mould, and indeed he bears a slight resemblance to the youthful Teagarden – same dark hair, round face, and comfortable aura.

"I started playing trombone," he told me, "when I was 11 years old. The band-director from the local Junior High School came round to our classroom and asked us if any of us had thought of taking up a musical instrument. A few of us put up our hands. I'd already discussed playing trumpet or trombone with my parents, and this man – his name was Can Owen – said that I would probably make a better trombonist because of the physical make-up of my chops, my embouchure. Later it turned out that he already had enough trumpet-players, and he was trying to recruit trombonists for the school band. So sometimes I feel that it's an instrument that fate has given me, and now it's up to me to make some sense out of it. It's a hard instrument to characterise. It has that noble side you mention, but it also has a kind of bumptious quality."

"While I was at school brother-in-law and I started shelling out for records – he bought *Bix Beiderbecke* and I bought *Louis Armstrong*. Then I started listening to *Count Basie*, *Lester Young*, *Teddy Wilson* and *Billie Holiday* and with them, of course, the great trombonists. *Dicky Wells*, *Vic Dickenson*, *Benny Morton*. I remember the first time I heard a *Dicky Wells* record I just flipped. I'd never heard anything like that in my life. *Benny Morton* I discovered first through the things he did with *Billie Holiday*, which are still among my favourite records – on those, in addition to how great the soloists were, in the ensembles everyone – *Lester Young*, *Buck Clayton*, *Benny Morton*, *Roy Eldridge* – was working with that cohesive feeling. What I like about good New Orleans music is that there's a unity there, everybody is thinking alike and when you hear the ensemble it is genuinely an ensemble with everybody fulfilling their role. The *Teddy Wilson*/*Billie Holiday* records certainly weren't New Orleans music, but they had that same unity."

"There was something special happening with the trombone in the 30s. The whole style was based on singing through the horn. *Jimmy Harrison* and *Jack Teagarden* opened a few doors. And *Miff Mole*, people don't talk about him, but he was one of the most accomplished trombonists of his day; in fact his technique and musicality are still a marvel to me. I think it might be that in that era everybody – saxophonists, trumpet-players, trombonists – was listening to *Louis Armstrong*, and his musical vocabulary translated somewhat easier to the trombone than did *Charlie Parker's* style. The first time I heard *Charlie Parker*, I thought, this is it, this is the end, and for a while I was on a *Parker kick*. Then one night I was

listening to tapes of the band and my playing sounded pretty hideous to me; so I thought, gee, I can love *Charlie Parker* all I want, but that doesn't necessarily mean I'm cut out to play like him. *JJ Johnson* – he made a breakthrough; and there are some fellows who were very capable in that idiom. But some others made it sound a little strained – it doesn't sound like the most natural way for them to play."

THE MENTION of singing through the horn reminded me of the astonishing sounds than *Nanton* and other *Ellington* trombonists made with the rubber plunger. To watch, plunger-playing is a feat of dexterity, in which the mute is manipulated and the instrument supported with one hand, while the other moves the slide. The results include some of the most astonishingly vocalised tonal effects in music: hoarse yells, sighs, moans and gut-bucket wails. I asked him how it felt to make them.

"I remember playing *Tricky Sam Nanton's* record of 'Chloe' with the *Ellington* band for a legit french-horn player, and a group of us had a very difficult time convincing him that it wasn't actually some guy singing 'ya-ya, ya-ya'. It does sound very human; if you pick up a plunger, you really have to make it sound like a voice, that's the whole idea, and that's why *Tricky Sam* was so terrific. He's generally in the mid to upper register of the horn, which is the best range for what he did with the plunger. Physically it's difficult, because there's a great deal of resistance; and technically there are problems. The little mute you use upsets the overtone series, and you have trouble if you go below G at the top of the bass clef staff. Also I find it's more challenging mentally to get that speaking quality. It's not easy, but if you pull it off, it's certainly a wonderful thing to do."

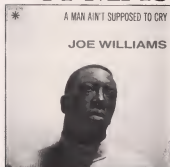
Nanton died over 40 years ago, and although *Barrett* at one time played with another notable *Ellingtonian*, the clarinetist *Barney Bigard*, and also with *Benny Goodman*, the original swing generation are now getting very thin on the ground. Did *Barrett* find the life of a young swing trombonist in the late 80s a lonely one?

"Well, not really. You've heard about me, I guess, through my recordings for *Concord*, and the same with *Scott Hamilton* and *Warren Vaché*, but there are scores of younger players who have a respect for the history of the music and play it with feeling and intelligence, and many – like *Ken Peplowski* – have a refreshing lack of prejudice about different kinds of music. *Ken*'ll go out and buy a *Freddie Keppard* record one day and a *Roland Kirk* the next. On trombone there are several players coming up in New York who scare me to death every time I hear them."

This is good news. For the future health of jazz, it is important that the music stays in contact with its past; with *Armstrong* and *Morton*, *Ellington* and *Basie*, *Parker* and *Monk*. But those idioms will only stay in the living repertoire if young players continue to appear who can think creatively within them. *Dan Barrett*, a major swing trombonist half a century younger than the others, is an invaluable musician. ●

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Life

In The Beehive

and Richard Cook enters a grave

new world *Photo by Nick White.*

DAVID SYLVIAN sits back and thinks about the work.

"There are evident failures and occasional successes, but my opinion of the work doesn't change much. When I've finished something I know if it's a success or not. It remains. You can hear if it's incomplete, or if it missed the mark completely. There are quite a few things like that. It's not very satisfying to go back and listen to it and think, well, this is the past eight years of my life."

A grudging appraisal. David Sylvian has always been severe on his own work. If Sylvian once seemed created just to be a pop star — the leader of one of the most glamorous groups in the world, Japan, when only a teenager — his path since the demise of the group in 1981 has been as far away from pop normality as can be imagined, while still, nominally, working within that business.

For those unfamiliar with his actions, a recap. Japan made a series of records in the late 1970s that proceeded from a kind of car-crash metal music to an exquisite porcelain sound of electronic hum and rhythm that broke up the familiar time signatures of rock. With Sylvian's voice as its epicentre, the group steered its huge following in some pretty strange directions: their final big hit, "Ghosts", was as unlikely a Top Ten record as there's ever been, a nearly motionless meditation. Their valedictory compilation is titled, wryly enough, *Exorcizing Ghosts*.

Ever since, Sylvian has grafted together a painstaking and deeply considered series of records. Three albums of songs, *Brilliant Trees*, *Gone To Earth* and *Secrets Of The Beehive*, have been juxtaposed with the instrumental projects *Words From The Shaman*, *Plight And Premonition* and the new *Flux And Mutability*, the latter two a double act with Can man Holger Czukay. Japan were clever at creating Eastern travelogues, but Sylvian's unorthodox, painterly music comes on as the real thing, a traveller's notebook, harmonies sketched in, tonalities suggested rather than fixed. The songs are without hooks, often written as single streams of melody; the instruments seem to hang in a kind of freefall, a veil of electronics in the background, a jazzed interplay of guitars and keyboards and horns at the front. Sylvian's voice rises from a murmur to a croon, and in his grave, uncertain way he's a compelling singer. His collaborators are impeccably chosen: you're as likely to hear Kenny Wheeler and John Taylor as Robert Fripp and frequent cohort Ryuichi Sakamoto.

WEATHERBOX INCLUDES all of it so far. Collected works are ponderous archives, certainly when it comes to albums marketed as rock music, but Sylvian's progress is fascinating to follow. *Brilliant Trees*, though clearly transitional from his older work, is arguably the most engaging of the records: such songs as "Nostalgia" and "Weathered Wall" are at once achingly beautiful and intricate with vaguely disquieting detail. *Gone To Earth* is harsher, its songs wrestled out, and

its instrumental half sounds like a series of unfinished gestures. *Secrets Of The Beehive* seems crisper, more definite, a sequence where Sylvian examines some other lives and chooses a particularly precise music to go with them. His own singing grows darker and heavier across the records; *Beehive's* "Maria" has a subterranean timbre to it. Meanwhile, there are the records with Czukay. They suggest a microphone roving through a laboratory, players and sounds appearing and submerging in the flow.

These aren't sensational records; there's nothing in them to shock. Sylvian is peeling off his own skin — there is strong confessional meat in such as "Let The Happiness In" — but he's doing it with the finest of implements. Often he needs an indulgent ear. In the instrumental pieces especially, the music can drift along without much happening. "Mutability", for instance, sounds more like a refined variation on one of Eno's old trance pieces such as "Spirits Drifting".

"I asked Holger along," remembers Sylvian, "to be one of the ingredients in the mix for *Brilliant Trees*. I didn't know what he'd bring as a musician. As a result he just brought two dictaphones and a bunch of tapes! But he became a very close friend. *Plight And Premonition* wasn't something planned — I was there to do a vocal for his record and we just got started on something. There was three nights' worth of improvising and then I left before I did the job I went there for."

"Plight" was originally just a ten-minute piece of music which Holger worked on for six months afterwards, adding signals from short-wave radio and stuff, and finally turning it into the piece it is now. "Premonition" is a piece we did at the end of the three days and it's just as it stood. In the same way, "Flux" is Holger's piece and "Mutability" is mine. But the way Holger works, he tries to capture the moment which seems to lie right on the line between where you're dabbling or performing. There comes a moment when you try to find your way, then you find it, and you do the performance. He tries to get you just before the point of performance, so there's something of the original naivety. It can be frustrating when you feel you can go on to do something much better, but he's adamant about capturing this essence.

"I dislike studios immensely, but I like Holger's studio because it's all one room and it's geared towards the musician. You never really know when you're being recorded."

There's something unexpected about hearing him profess a mistrust of studios. One thinks of Sylvian as a musician who could cocoon himself away in a studio for the rest of his life, endlessly tinkering and embellishing. Though he now cuts an almost ragged figure next to the unblemished blond immortal of Japan, he still looks shy of sunlight, eyes hidden behind darkened lenses. It's still amusing to hear a definite South London accent in his voice, and to discover that he's a cheerful, encouraging conversationalist, not the introspective monk which, intentionally or not, he appeared to wish to be.

Still, it was a surprise to see him embarking on a concert tour last year, backed by an intriguing group including Mark

Isham, David Toen, Richard Barbieri and Steve Jansen.

"I wish we'd had more time to work together," says Sylvian. "We'd only rehearsed for a week as a full unit and the technical difficulties put the idea of expanding the pieces out of the window for a while. Towards the end things were happening, and we felt now was the time to do pure improvisation, which is what we all wanted to do. But it was too late. If you get one good concert out of ten, I'd say you're getting somewhere. The rest, you're coasting along."

Pure improvisation? Quite a step. Is he frightened by such a prospect?

"It doesn't worry me. I worry far more about being in a situation where everything is secure and you start to feel complacent about it. I wanted an intensity, because in a two-hour performance if you don't hit the peak, then you really feel it. You have to feel passionate about it to lift everything else along with you. You hope the audience aren't waiting for 'Red Guitar' for a moment of light relief."

Sylvian admits that such an internalised view of performance can ignore an audience's base desire to be 'entertained', but that may be his clearest link with the free music that, on other levels, he seems remote from. We need more unpatronising communication between players and listeners: a commitment to uncompromised intensity is one way.

"I did the tour because a change was taking place within me. I've kept away from writing material, which is why most of the things I've done and will be doing are improvised pieces. I had no desire to sit down and write. I'm finding it easier to tap into things with improvisation. A piece like 'Mutability' is almost pure improvisation and it speaks a lot for me now. I'm still fascinated by instrumental music and this idea of working at improvising - I'm not technically a 'good player' but I enjoy working and letting things happen that way."

THE IDEA of work - that thing which chaps on building sites do, isn't it? - seems central to Sylvian's impulse. It traces through his lyrics as a constant, from "Weathered Wall" ("working at all hours") to "The Boy With The Gun" ("work has just begun"). It's the paradox of this music that its delicacy and acuteness - castigated by the unsympathetic as precious or pallid - is achieved through hard labour.

"As a person, maybe I'm more detached from the physical realities than the intellectual ones. I tend to attack things first with the mind. I suppose I'm more of the mind than of the body. So I use references of that kind to the work of the mind. I don't think it's a longing for physical work or that I feel divorced from it, because I don't. It must relate to a kind of growing process - that through action, things happen, and through experience you grow and progress and learn. Through struggle comes knowledge - maybe it's easier to represent that in physical terms."

Is this the writer tussling with his angel?

"Well, it's too easy to write lyrics that are totally abstract, which only you can divine the meaning of. I try to put them in

forms which other people can relate to and apply to themselves. Often they struggle to deal with things that it's very hard to even have a conversation about, something which people have to put into words with inverted commas around them, to try and speak about emotions and thoughts that are too abstract to get a proper grasp of - but which you can grasp yourself, as an individual, as something you're in touch with. It's a matter of transforming that into the everyday and not making it fantastic or unreal. Something that is generally missing, especially in lyrical form, in popular music. It's something I grapple with. Again, I'm only moderately successful."

If there's a criticism of Sylvian's outlook, it could be a charge of naivety. Next to the average Company concert, an 'improvised' set by a Sylvian group might seem profoundly conservative; to a listener with much jazz experience, this way of working could be elementary stuff. But Sylvian seems as alive to the difficulties as anybody.

"I like to approach things intuitively and in a way I've avoided getting into the understanding of past works on a level that would make me approach things in a different way. I'm constantly trying to reinvent ways of approaching the keyboard in a very naive way - the way, when you first sit down at a keyboard, you don't know anything about harmonies. You just play, and you wait to hear something that makes a decent sound. I like to keep things as simplistic as that, even when working with quite complex tonalities. On the single I've just done, I'm using half-tones and quarter-tones, but if I really went into the intellectuality of it, it would take away any intuitive feeling."

"People like Terry Riley and LaMonte Young, I could never approach things that way. People work that way and produce album after album which are all small steps forward in something which they perceive to be important. It has to be done, because they're the people who are pushing the barriers back. But I don't work on that level."

"Pop Song" is a new single by David Sylvian, unconnected to the other releases, and it brings his work in some sort of full circle: there's the unshaped electronics of "Ghosts" set around a quiet stomping rhythm, a pop song suspended in the middle. Probably no more 'radical' single will come out this year.

"It came out of an improvisation," he explains, "and it felt so out of step with everything else I'm doing, so I thought, why not? I programmed a whole bunch of stuff and improvised with it straight off. It's interesting... I'd like to take the tuning I'm working with now and take it into orchestral things as well as electronics."

Work, it seems, has just begun.

Weatherbox is released in November by Virgin. Pop Song is available as a single. Sylvian is currently working with the former members of Japan, although, he insists, not as some sort of reunion for commercial reasons. If any recordings are subsequently released, they won't be under the name Japan. Sylvian's solo albums are still available individually.

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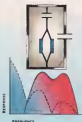
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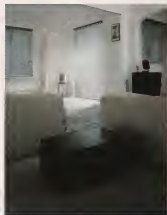
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Is this the supergroup to outpace the rest?

after quark

Steve Lake meets the quartet that plays, sings and damages itself.

ALFRED 23 Harth says he's glad that Vladimir Estragon is a *European* band. Yeah, says somebody else, if we need any world music (small sneer) we'll just *sample* it, ha ha.

Estragon, in a round dozen of concerts so far, has perplexed no end of listeners.

"We really irritate the audiences, polarize them," Harth says, cheerfully. "Because the musical programme is so overloaded with information—traditional aspects, avant garde experimental, old time music, no time. People are desperately trying to grasp the message. What does it mean? Where can we put it? Is it jazz?"

"Is it jazz?" echoes F M Einheit, (Mufti, to his friends). "What a stupid and uninteresting question. For my taste, this is pop music anyway."

Ulrike Haage chips in, "Well, for me, the idea is to get free of the genres. Of course, there are references to the traditions, but my wish is always to find other things."

Phil Minton, who has been finding other things for longer than I can remember, wanders off to find a bottle opener.

Vladimir Estragon is a strange band, definitely, a bizarre association of talents. Until a couple of months ago, Ulrike Haage was a pop star, a keyboardist with The Rainbirds, who until their recent dissolution were the most popular band in Germany. Mufti is best known for hammering scrap metal in the percussion section of Einstürzende Neubauten. Harth has long hovered between free jazz (his duets with Peter Brötzmann, for example) and experimental rock (in the groups Cassiber, Gestalt Et Jive and Duck And Cover). Minton, of course, has been a mainstay of Mike Westbrook's ensembles for about 20 years and along the way has become, unchallenged, the freest male vocalist in Europe.

But before the formation of the group, half the musicians had never heard the other half.

That name, Vladimir Estragon (henceforth V E) may sound oddly familiar. On first encountering it, I wondered if this was not one of Leo Feigin's Lithuanian or Siberian discoveries. The literary-minded should grasp at once, however, that Vladimir and Estragon are the tramps beneath the leafless tree in Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*. It was with the intention of wiring some music for *Godot* that Harth first contacted

Haage. An intelligent choice, I think, since her piano playing has a sort of cryptic tenuousness about it that could well serve to symbolize the confused lassitude of Beckett's characters. Like Paul Bley or Ran Blake, Haage can, when she chooses, use space almost painfully. (Though this is only one of several approaches she employs.)

Haage wanted to bring in Mufti, whom she'd met while he was performing in a theatre piece, with Neubauten, in Hamburg. And then Harth thought maybe Minton could sing the parts of Vladimir and Estragon. "What happened," says Ulrike, "was that we formed the band by post." It quickly moved beyond the original concept. Minton couldn't help but bring in a whole village full of vocal characters, and Mufti had had enough of theatre music. Besides, he frankly confesses, "I couldn't play the parts they'd written for me, anyway."

But the drummer counts his first meeting with Phil Minton as a revelation.

"I'd never heard of him before our first rehearsals. We started to work on a duet thing and it was really like an *explosion*. He's just incredible."

By the time the first gigs were lined up, V E was cramming the whole of its members' abilities into sets that buckled under the sheer weight of ideas. A lot happens in their music, at full volume.

IT'S BEWILDERING just to *look* at. Their Munich concert began with Harth and Haage alone on the stage. He somewhat "jazz" in demeanour despite an odd pair of spectacles complex as a ship's sextant, she rock-ish, playing electric piano standing up, swaying as she found the chords to make Harth's stringently abstract tenor saxophone lines doubly piquant. Minton wandered on, a bit dusky and road-worn in shabby black jacket and sandals, added a little trumpet, then hauled air backwards down his larynx to produce caterwauling shrieks that made the goths in the front row jump in alarm. Then their man Mufti was there, hobbling, his right leg in plaster. He pounced, as best he could, on the bass drum which was lying flat on the floor and pummelled it in a thunderous neanderthal beat he was to maintain for most of the set, sometimes substituting housebricks for sticks. By the gig's



end, large chunks of flesh were missing from his hands and his camouflage boiler-suit was spattered with blood. He seemed to regard this as normal wear and tear, part of the drummer's lot.

"I figured the rhythms had to be simple," he says. "I didn't see any point in me trying to play jazz or compete with players on the free scene or whatever. I just do what I do, happy with my bricks and stones."

"Mufti's beautiful," Phil Minton avers. "He's like the antithesis of every drummer I've ever worked with, but what he does always seems to fit. Interesting the reactions he's getting from other players, too. Like Paul Lovens, who's such a fine detail, busy sort of drummer, he saw us in Nickelsdorf and was knocked out."

Minton, initially, was less happy with the high-tech elements of the group's music. Haage also plays synthesizer and sequencers and Phil felt that these mitigated against the spontaneity of the improviser's real-time world.

Haage: "He said 'Oh no, not machines!' But as we got further into the music, the machines really began to live, too."

Minton: "I'm not completely reconciled yet, like with the tape . . ." (A piece called "Streetscenes" incorporates a dense collage of taped sample sounds.) ". . . when you improvise against that you have to be very exact. The tape definitely dictates the way it has to be. You can't get too loose. It's hard work."

Nonetheless, Minton and Mufti have the most liberated roles within the ensemble. Harth and Haage have a greater responsibility to the structure, but then it is their structure, most of the compositions are theirs.

The group's debut album, *Three Quarks For Master Mark* has just been released. It's on Tiptoe Records, a subsidiary of Munich mainstream jazz label Enja. There's something vaguely comical about the alliance. V E doesn't do much tiptoeing. It kicks the door down.

Three Quarks was recorded under jazz conditions, in a hectic three days.

Harth: "I think maybe that was more difficult for Ulrike and Mufti. Phil and I are used to working under that kind of time pressure. I've even learned to like it. Whereas Einstürzende Neubauten have spent a year so far recording their new

album."

Minton: "A year in a studio?? I'd go mad."

V E used its three days well. *Three Quarks* is certainly among the year's most striking releases. Despite its wide ranging frame of references – from Schubert to Hanns Eisler to free jazz and thrash rock (not to mention the theme from the "Woody Woodpecker Song", Mufti's favourite tune, which puts in a four-second appearance) – the music coheres, although at first it is hard to grasp just how or why. It is, I suppose, a reflection of the gusto with which they attack it. Theirs is a complex, witty (sometimes outrageously funny) music, but it is one music. Earnest but not po-faced, modern rather than post-modern. Definitely not music about music, unlike the smug output of most of New York's "downtown" crowd. When Estragon is serious, the sincerity is self-evident, they don't seek to blind you with "cleverness". (They couldn't anyway, given Mufti's artless, engaging, jackhammer beat.)

At the very least, V E is the best context for Minton's vocal acrobatics since the heyday of Westbrook's Solid Gold Cadillac. Its punchy, exuberant energy goads him into more forthright responses than the massed ranks of free players do on his own *Berlin Station*. On *Three Quarks* he has to get to the point, and quickly. There's no discursive indulgence.

So what are the chances of survival for a band like this?

"I think very good," says Alfred 23 Harth (I never did get to ask him about the "23"; perhaps it's better not to know). "Each of us feels that this can go on for a long time. The music has quickly developed a strong personality of its own. I worked hard for years with my last band (Gestalt Et Jive) and never got to the level this quartet has established in less than a year. With the last band we had to struggle to enjoy ourselves. But there's something about Vladimir Estragon that feels very natural and very right."

In time, V E is likely to prove a bridge-building band, ferrying listeners between free jazz and Neubauten's passionate noise-rock and modern composition. Audiences are going to be enlightened, even as the players are.

Vladimir Estragon, in its questing adventurousness (with a belly-laugh or two along the road) is indicative of the way forward, for sure.

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Two of Britain's leading young saxophonists, Courtney Pine and Iain Ballamy both have new albums in the shops. Pine has been a leading light in **Jazz Warriors**, Ballamy in **Loose Tubes**. We featured both men in the celebrated **Young Saxophones** feature which ran in *Wire* 25 in March 1986. Nearly four years on, what's changed for these musicians? We asked Tony Herrington to interview them both together: here is the transcript, taken down at London's Sadlers Wells Theatre in September. Photo by

Coney! Jay

locking horns

TH: *THE FIRST TIME* either of you appeared in Wite was in the "Young Saxophonists" feature in early '86. You both seemed pretty sure of the directions you wanted to take. Are you satisfied with the way you've progressed since then?

IB: Well, it's going to take a lot longer than three years. It's a long-term objective really. Probably a bit further along the way. Courtney's just done his third album, I've just got my first one out.

CP: Which is a crime, for Iain Ballamy to have just one album out.

TH: *Why is that?*

IB: It's just taken that long really. Between doing Loose Tubes and Earthworks and keeping my own thing together, all the time it was developing but for one reason or another it was never the right time. When it came to be the right time it was as soon as it was possible to do it. That's just the way it's gone. It's like five years' worth all crammed on to one album. I couldn't do one a year, put it like that.

TH: *The way jazz musicians record today is very different to how they did in the past. For instance, when John Coltrane was with Impulse they'd just tape a live date every two months and release the recordings at similar intervals.*

IB: Well I couldn't work like that but I don't want the next one to be in five years' time either. When you make your first record all your playing experience up to that point is suddenly marked off. It's your first outburst and so it's going to be different to how your second or third albums will work.

CP: It costs a lot of money to make records so obviously you can't make one every day. You're having to convince someone that the project you have is worthwhile and that can be difficult. I'd love to bring out a record every day. Every day I write a new tune I'd like to present it on vinyl the way Prince does, when he goes in to the studio every demo is a master. But with jazz that's just not possible.

TH: *What attitudes do your respective (major) labels have towards your music?*

CP: I get a very positive attitude. Of course it's a new thing for Island to be dealing with jazz. They obviously realise that I'm not going to sell as many records as U2 but they haven't put any strictures on me, saying, why don't we bring in Robin Millar to do a mix on this track? I'm very lucky in that they literally just gave me a cheque and said go into the studio. It's a fortunate position.

IB: Once we'd done the first Earthworks album they (Editions EG) began to learn a lot more about what was going on with the kind of music I'm involved in. Then after we finished the second Earthworks album I think they just felt it was time to do a solo album, although it was my idea. I took it to them. Loose Tubes actually got the money together to record it and I took the finished DAT master round and said, if you like it, let's talk. If not, fair enough. So rather than going in and saying, look, I can make a really nice record out

of all these tunes I've written and having to sell it to them like that, I did it the other way around, saying this is how it is and how it's going to be and so they took it on on that basis. They are positive about it. Their attitude is that once they decide to sign something they'll see it through. Hopefully it will be an ongoing thing.

TH: *How far out could you take the music before they turned round and said, wait, this is too weird, no one's going to buy it? You're both in the popular domain to a certain extent but is there a point where the music progresses beyond what is deemed populist? Are you restricted from working in certain areas, free improvisation, for instance, because you're signed to major labels? Or because the audience that has built up around the New Jazz has done so around a specific type of jazz, hard bop, soul jazz?*

CP: Well . . . you do what you feel like as an artist. If you don't want to sell any records then you put out an album with nothing on it. But if you want to appeal to a certain market or if you want to present what you're doing at that time and you feel it is relevant, then you release it. As well as being a therapeutic thing for musicians, music is also a business and we have to be aware of that.

IB: That's a side that you have to embrace, really. I mean neither of us are in it for the money, I feel I can say that, but . . . You say how far out can you take the music, but it's more a case of . . . if you're playing the music that you feel you should be playing, that feels right to you, then you owe it to yourself to make sure that that's what you do. You do what you believe is right and hopefully the thing that comes across to people is that they should do what they feel to be right for them as well. It is what it is. If it comes out how you feel it should be then it's the real, honest thing.

TH: *The thinking behind that question was . . . the main interest in jazz now is coming from a club base, the groove thing. You've both been associated with that in one way or another, but isn't that an approach that inevitably shuts out much of the music's development? The point I'm making is that if you decided to take the music one step further, progress from Coltrane to Albert Ayler, say, won't you be shut out eventually?*

CP: It's like a stepping stone, though. You have a group like Working Week and maybe some A&R man decides to say they have this jazz sound, so someone who listens to that and likes it might think, well, if this is jazz then I want to hear something that's even better. A similar thing with Acid Jazz. That's grown to a point where you're getting people researching Art Blakey's music and then going even deeper than that. Maybe they're looking for better grooves to dance to but in pursuance of that they're going to cross over to a lot of other stuff, they're going to cross Pharoah Sanders' turf and even deeper things than that.

IB: I do believe one thing. You can't really tell until sufficient time has passed whether there was a lot of hot air about something, for instance, Acid Jazz, or whether it was



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any good. That's why records are so important. With a live performance it's there, breathing at the time, but then it's gone. If you make a record it then it's there to be judged, to see if it will stand the test of time. That's the only way to tell, especially these days when things spring up so fast. In the end the only proof of how good my album is or Courtney's is, is how they will sound in five years' time. That's the really important thing, not how much fuss is made of it at the time. Like pop music is all about the big push, the quick turnover, and that's dangerous for jazz because someone who is really good can get shoved up and then shoved away again. It's more important that record companies take on musicians and give them some kind of long-term commitment. Very often they want you to commit yourself to them, but it's them being committed to you that's important. So if you want to go and do something and they say it's too far out you have to be able to say, trust me, let me do the music and you take care of the rest of it.

TH: IS THE media treatment of jazz at odds with the way the musicians work? For instance, jazz musicians are now treated with the same kind of transient approach that's given to pop musicians. But jazz is all about gradual progression, slow and painful change, maybe.

CP: But that's the way the media is. They discover someone, talk about them for a couple of months and move on to somebody else. But I'm glad that it's happening now because this generation isn't going to be that important. It's the next generation that will matter, because what's happening now is going to benefit the kids to come. There's 12- and 13-year-olds thinking about jazz and playing the saxophone because they've seen me or Iain on TV. Now those kids are going to be twice as good as we are, because if you look at America where there's this deep tradition, every decade that passes produces players that are more and more phenomenal.

IB: I think it's good if it's done positively. There is a music industry and there are musicians and sometimes it seems as if the music industry is no place for a musician. It's great for a businessman with a flair for music, but for someone just concerned with music then it can be a pretty treacherous thing. There's a point where jazz meets the system of how records are produced and get to be released and it's a very delicate point. The only hope for the future is for the two to combine. But it has to be done right. It can't just be treated frivolously by record companies as a tax loss.

TH: Let's talk about the new LPs. Courtney, people have been referring to *The Vision's Tale* as the difficult third album. Is that how you approached it?

CP: Well, when I signed with Island I intentionally made a deal that would build my career, that's what I talked about with my A & R man, that it would show this guy from London trying to play jazz and working through various styles, stripping himself until you see the bare flesh. And at the time I recorded *The Vision's Tale* I was involved in playing in that particular style so the record became a way of documenting

that.

TH: The record seems to cover a lot of ground as far as the history of the music goes. "In A Mellow Tone", for instance, sounds like Ben Webster with Tommy Flanagan.

CP: There was a conscious effort to get all that out of the way and progress onto something else, because at that time, and the LP was recorded nearly a year ago, I didn't feel ready to start bringing in outside things. I need to understand something to the full and then be able to shape it in a way that will be different and appropriate to me.

TH: The choice of cover versions is interesting. "I'm An Old Cow Hand", for instance.

CP: That was one of the first jazz tunes I heard. What happened was I had about 20 standards and when we got into the studio . . . we didn't rehearse or anything, it was just a matter of, what do you like to play, what key do you want to play in. We just ran through some things and we used what worked.

TH: Why do you play standards? For instance, there are no standards on Iain's LP.

CP: Well, Julian Joseph who played piano with me knows Iain, and he remembers seeing Iain when he was 15 or 16 and at that time Iain was already into playing standards. I wasn't, so it's something I've yet to fully deal with. From a compositional point of view the works of Duke Ellington or Thelonious Monk are phenomenal, just to see how the chord progressions work is incredible. If you want to build an engine then you have to look at one that is already perfect and design yours similar to that. Hopefully my own compositions will be better after studying that type of music. Also hearing the way I improvise on those pieces, and by comparing that to the approaches of Eric Dolphy or Charlie Parker, I can see how far I am from them and finely tune certain things. It's a way of bettering myself as a player.

TH: What do you take into consideration when choosing a standard or composing a piece yourself as far as degrees of difficulty for improvising upon it go?

CP: I try to find pieces that are kind of out for me to play and that will push me to a higher level than before.

IB: I still play standards but I had a revelation when I discovered I could write my own tunes. It was the feeling that once you've done your own stuff no one can turn round and say, yeah, that was very nice but have you heard Ben Webster do it? When you play your own music there's a feeling that you're breaking new ground. What Courtney said about learning the standard song form, there is a lot to be learned there, there's something particularly right about certain songs, about the overall shape of the piece of music. But once you've established that, if you want to make an original statement then you really need to write original tunes. Like I'd love to do another arrangement of *Porgy And Bess*, but it would immediately be compared to the Gil Evans version which in turn was compared to the Gershwin version. That's inevitable. It's how people pick up on things.

TH: This question of originality seems to get applied to jazz in a

way that doesn't affect other musics. For instance, in dance music you get a group like Ten City whose records are basically non-for-note recreations of what The O'Jays were doing 15 years ago and they are heralded as being in the vanguard of the music. In jazz, Wynton Marsalis does a similar thing with Miles Davis' 60s records and gets slagged off for it.

IB: Well, the real tradition of jazz has always been about change. The problem that musicians come up against is people's reluctance to accept what's happening now when they've only just managed to absorb what went on 20 years ago. Now people are raving about Herbie Hancock's 60s records but he's been onto something else for years and it's the same with Miles. Sometimes it seems as if the tradition means having to uphold everything that came before you, but I feel that the only way to meet the challenge of the jazz tradition is to make an individual statement and try to break new ground.

CP: That's true, but you can't just suddenly appear and say, I'm an original. You have to know about the history of the music before you can make an individual statement.

IB: And you have to absorb the thing in the right order. You need to understand how it started and how one thing progressed into another because it's all related, one style is extracted from another and to jump on at a certain point means you won't be able to play the music convincingly because its roots won't all be there. That's what I love about Roland Kirk's playing, you can hear everything from Coleman Hawkins through Charlie Parker right up to his own thing. In fact it's as if the spirit of the music gives it its originality rather than the actual sound.

TH: *Is there a danger that you can get bogged down in the history of the music?*

IB: There is if it's forced on you. It's no good being told you can't listen to John Coltrane because you haven't heard Lester Young yet. You have to be able to discover the music for yourself.

CP: That's what happened to me. I mean, I loved Coltrane but then I discovered that he got a phrase, that two-five-one, from Dexter Gordon. So I searched out Dexter Gordon and from hearing his records I realised there was this link and I started wondering how far back this link went. So I started searching out other players, and by doing that certain things that Coltrane played became easier to understand. Because you'd start hearing things stripped down. It all just seemed to make sense.

IB: Everyone gets on at a certain point and you discover the music by finding how that point connects with the past. I think it's important to absorb at least the last 50 years, to build up a sketch of the music's progression.

TH: *In that case, isn't it unrealistic to just study the jazz tradition, doesn't it follow that you should examine the way jazz interacts with other genres and follow those lines of development?*

IB: I think it's dangerous to expect too much from a musician, or for their music to cover certain areas. For me, if the music is good and it has the spirit, whether it moves you

when you hear it and communicates a certain thing, then it's not important what kind of music it is.

TH: *OK, but saying as we're on or around the subject, can you tell me something about your activities outside of jazz? For instance, Courtney has recently appeared with both Mica Paris and The Pet Shop Boys.*

CP: Well, I started off by playing in a reggae band and a funk band, both of which were successful, so getting involved in that kind of thing is not something I'm aiming to do because I've already done it. But being a saxophone player you get asked to do sessions on pop records, especially as the saxophone is very close to the human voice. So I did a few sessions and it got to the stage where I was asked to do some live dates. It was an interesting experience because the business thing is ten times what I'd been used to on the jazz circuit. It was interesting to take a step to one side for a while and see how the other half lives. I was playing with a lot of machines as well and it was interesting to see how I coped playing to the same patterns every night and having people around me miming.

IB: Do you feel that it becomes more of a performing thing rather than an exploration?

CP: Oh yeah, a lot of it is safe. Improvising isn't safe at all. You can play a safe improvisation if you want to but the satisfaction comes from improvisation that is difficult.

IB: It's the points where it can go wrong that are exciting. When people say that a record has some really magical moments on it, that's probably the point where you nearly came flying off the rails. You can always tell when someone like Courtney has been brought in to play on a pop record because he'll bring it something that you can't get out of machines or a tight arrangement, one of those precarious moments, the bit that excites.

CP: I'd really like to see how far I could pull the two together (jazz and pop) without losing the validity of each. You get people like Laurie Anderson and The Cocteau Twins incorporating elements of improvisation from a pop angle. I'd just like to see how far you could go in bringing them together without destroying them.

TH: *You mean fusion? There's plenty of that about but not much of it seems to have solved the problems of combining different elements without first having to put them through some kind of moderating process.*

IB: It's weird. Whenever anyone talks about fusion it always implies compromise. As far as jazz goes it seems to suggest combining the music you want to play with the music people want to hear. But I believe that if people can be exposed to jazz in its purest forms then they'll like it. I'm confident that if people get to hear my record or Courtney's . . . they won't say, what's this crap? They'll hear that there is something there and that it will excite them and interest them and give them something that they can't get from other forms of music. I'm not making records for people to disappear without trace. I make records that I believe people will like. I have to have that confidence otherwise I'd stop now. ●

I AM THE BLUES

by Willie Dixon
(Quartet, £15.95)

WILLIE DIXON has always been there. At a time when the entire blues audience in Britain comprised 20 men with duffle coats and idealistic pebble-lensed glasses, he was already racking up bag-selling 78s as at least a third of the Big Three Trio. Long one of the most visible men on the Chicago blues scene, both in physique and work-rate, his is a story which deserves to be told. This volume tells it in the form of interviews, the pick of 60 hours of them in fact, collated by Don Snowden who adds explanatory summaries and extracts from briefer talks with people who have been in professional or personal contact with Dixon.

Willie is best known as the man who wrote such pivotal blues songs as "Hoochie Coochie Man" and whose benign presence behind his double bass has been a feature of countless blues festivals around the world. But he didn't get where he is today easily. Raised at the dirt-road end of Vicksburg, Mississippi, he earned an outside amount of living into his early life: fleeing away from home for the first time at the age of 12, hobnobbing at Memphis, serving spells in jail for vagrancy. By the mid-1930s he was making his mark in Chicago, on the musical scene as a member of a gospel group and upon his opponents as a promising heavyweight boxer. The latter career ended abruptly when, if one reads between the lines, he administered summary justice to a promoter who had cheated him, leaving him free to scuffle a musical career as a singer and double bassist. In addition, he was writing songs, which he initially either sold outright to established artists or printed on leaflets, sang in the street and sold the leaflets to onlookers. "I was selling 'The Signifying Monkey' for 15 cents, two for a quarter, everywhere. I was using all the bad terms, it was rough; when you cleaned it up it didn't sell as well," he recalls.

For many readers, the core of the book will be Dixon's detailed reminiscences of his days at Chess Records, Coben Records and then Chess again in the 50s and 60s. He it was who produced many of the classic records by Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, Otis Rush, Howling Wolf and other blues stars, not to mention "Sincerely" by The Moonglows, as well as playing bass, occasionally singing, and acting as Len Chess's Mr Fixit. Chess described

him as "my right arm", though Dixon's admirably restrained account of Chess's business practices, particularly with regard to song copyright and royalty payments, makes one wonder how Chess would have treated his left arm. "Leonard was a businessman," says he, "and what they called a businessman in America is that if it wasn't against the law it was good business."

In more recent years, Willie has straightened out his publishing rights, following the maxim "Don't get mad - get smart", and still pursues a variety of projects including a recording studio and a Blues Foundation. His tale is an absorbing one for any student or fan of blues music, and is told with gentle humour, dignity and a good deal of down-home philosophy. Witness his explanation to a wartime draft board of why he didn't feel involved with the war just because he was an American citizen: "Well, an egg can be hatched in a stove but that doesn't make it a biscuit just because it came out of the stove."

MIKE ATHERTON

OH, JESS! A JAZZ LIFE

by Kath Keller
(Mayan Music Corporation)

CRAZEOLGY:
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A CHICAGO JAZZMAN

by Bud Freeman with Robert Wolf
(Bayou Press, £15.95)

THESE TWO books cover some of the same ground historically, in the sense that they defer to the received view of the 'Chicago' period as the stuff of myth and legend - dear old Bix, drunk at the piano (why is it nobody ever seems to see him playing cornet?); wonderful old Louis playing with Carroll Dickerson's band, marvellous Jimmy Noone at the Apex Club - the epicentre of the universe and weren't they all nice to us? Beyond that, Jess Stacy's and Bud Freeman's paths crossed musically too, and of course they have in common that they survived to tell the tale.

The differences then emerge. First in style. The Stacy book is a biography, and though Keller does tell his subject's story there is rather too much profile-style window-dressing in the narrative (the "table is laid with a canary yellow table cloth . . . porcelain that would

not blush in the company of Sevres . . . Stacy pours from a bottle of Joseph Phelps of Napa Valley '77 Cabernet Merlot . . ." I mean, come ON now). Freeman's volume is an 'as told to' with journalist Wolf, and therefore presents a straight autobiographical narrative.

There are differences in the two books beyond this, however, and they concern the way things developed for the two musicians concerned. Maybe in some senses personalities structured careers. Stacy is best remembered for his several stints with Benny Goodman, not so much for his work with the less historically-favoured Bob Crosby band, or indeed anywhere else. Essentially he was a sideman, even on those records where he had adequate space, like the trio sessions for Commodore made with Freeman in 1938 when they both worked for Goodman (who, incidentally, gets a good press from neither of them: "no smile of Benny's ever reached above his upper lip" (Stacy); "he just lived in a kind of egomaniacal shell" (Freeman)).

Freeman, on the other hand, seems to have decided early on that he wanted to be, in his word, a "soloist". Although he begins to sound a little pompous and snobbish by the end of his story, and consistently displays the kind of armoured ego that places itself at the centre of every event, his recounting of the ups and downs, the choices and uncertainties inherent in such a career come over clearly and strongly.

But that's what he wanted. Working for others was like "factory work", and in any case, for Freeman, "you can be very unhappy just working all the time".

Being a factory hand, in steady employment, seems to have suited Stacy: when the big band scene closed down he worked residencies in piano-bars in California, then in the mid-50s when things had reached the state that "if it wasn't the jukebox it was the television going full blast" he simply packed it in and took a nine-to-five job.

Both these musicians made some lovely music in their time, in their different ways. Their lives can be read with ease at the anecdotal level, but between the lines there's a lot to be considered about what it's like to be a professional musician, and the several aspects and meanings that can be attached to 'the jazz life'. Both books have indexes and discographies (selective in Freeman's case): there's no English price attached to the Stacy book but the nearest distributor seems to be Jazz media Aps, Dorteavej 39, 2400 Copenhagen DK; it can be got for 225 Dkr.

JACK COOKE

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speak the speech, I damn you

After a dozen years of musical harangues, the great voice of overground abuse releases

her spoken word record Mike Fish got a tongue lashing. Photo by Mary Staddon

"IT'S AN effective, uh, instrument of torture."

That's Lydia Lunch speaking. About her speaking voice. I have a tape of it here and it unreeels on and on with savage eloquence. The rest of you can hear it on *Oral Fixation*, the first of the spoken word manifestos on her label Widowspeak (the other initial release is *Death Of An Asshole* by the extraordinarily degenerate seeker of scum oratory, Emilio Cubeiro). But let's get back to Lunch.

"It was recorded in a place which is all seated, a beautiful theatre, 500 people on a Sunday afternoon, and they're not making a peep. I usually prefer to execute as much control as possible, so that I can have people seated and eliminated, so if there's heckling I can repartee in the appropriate manner. I don't want a drunken idiot shouting out and interrupting my stream of consciousness. I need to know who the heckler is. Baring your frustrations in front of hundreds of people is a very intimate situation."

Lydia sighs. "I don't like to perform in bars and pubs where people are already drunk, stupid and looking to cause trouble. What I have to say is a discourse on the ills of the world and the abuses I can no longer stand to watch to go past me. That's my only job, to document the ills I can no longer stand, and hope that some of the idiots out there can find some relief in this concise a diatribe. It isn't really art, it's politics. The politics of abuse."

You don't know Lunch? This record is a fine place to make her acquaintance. Lydia came along 13 years ago as the youthful chief combatant in the anti-rock, anti-punk band Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, a now-legendary staple of the New York underground. Since then, this prolific, restless mind has compiled a tremendous personal catalogue of music, film and printed words which add up to an enraged attack on social, moral and political ills of all kinds, at all levels. Highlights: records by the band Eight Eyed Spy and collaborations with Einstürzende Neubauten, Clint Ruin (AKA Foetus) and Birthday Party; various banned or molested films includ-

ing *Right Side Of My Brain* and *Fingered*; her forthcoming set of essays or monologues, *Incriminating Evidence*, a torture chamber of superb vividness and verbal elegance. If you want one record, check *Hysteria*, a personally-chosen backtrack through much of this. Or get *Oral Fixation*.

LIKE EVERYONE else, I have a few spoken-word records, most of them gathering dust, but this is one to use in many ways. It's a great noise – immaculately delivered, Lunch's script is as mellifluous as it is bilious in its intent; and as a grisly celebration of language, of the pen slicing itself up on the sword, it's a feast. But can we call it a prescriptive record?

"Mandatory listening for anyone who wakes up nauseous! Sure, why not? I don't think it could abate anyone's dissatisfactions or frustration, but at least they'll know there's someone who suffers the same things. People *know* these problems exist, but maybe when it's concisely edited into one screeching ball of pain, it will cause some relief. Yes, these all plague me now – so shutup, it's over! If only it could do the same for me, but I can't say that it does."

As she drily points out, this isn't catharsis, or exorcism: nothing's been eliminated by these speeches, and there are merely more atrocities to pile on to the end of the old ones.

"It isn't relief. It's an endless condition that's been going on since man took power. Until power and democracy are readdressed, until people become humanists and not fuckin' democrats or fascists or communists – it's not going to change. This isn't performance or art, it's reality. I'm not creating something, it's not a visionary procedure, it's storytelling, which is the oldest form of communication – unless I go on stage and do cave paintings, which could be where I go into art. . . ."

"I can't abate the ills of society by talking about them. The audience's job will be to take the next step. But no one wants to be responsible for throwing the first stone."



How does she select the material for a speech?

"Well, what I'll be doing at The Power House (an extraordinary occasion where Lunch marshalled 12 other women to appear on stage with her, dealt with bucklers in deadly style and survived a plunge into an angry mob) is very topical. The uproar over abortion in America just now, which is a pathetic excuse to control women. Endless war—it's something I can't seem to get away from because it's a continuous state of mind. Space shuttles, why I think they should shoot prisoners into space as space junk. Why pay thousands of dollars to keep each prisoner in a horrible condition which will only destroy them? And why man must conquer space, because they know this planet is fuckin' over, and they're looking for another place to conquer. The white woman's need to rise up and join the revolution. . . . A place like that, you have to do a performance that's more conditioned to rhythm, more of a mantra."

Words as music: here is Lunch's chain of command with the jazz poets of yore, though she would distrust the connection. After all, this is a rap far more angry and militant and beneath-the-underdog than anything by such as Langston Hughes, Ken Kesey, Ginsberg or Baraka.

"I use words absolutely incorrectly," she shouts, "I savage them, I slaughter them. I'm just shouting headlines at you. I like to misuse words, misspell them, misappropriate them. My job is not to educate you over the English language and have some kind of fuckin' emotion over what I'm talking about. Sit back and be entertained, that's hardly my job. I'm an antagonist, a confrontationalist."

A BIT of a thesaurus, too. When she dies, she says with a smile, there'll be a library with her name on it. But why can't we see this woman on TV, as a host, a commentator?

"Can you place me? Are you trying to be my agent? A talking head? Why don't I have my own talk show? I ask myself that! I can't answer. I do what I have to do and the interview and the media end of it are not my preoccupations.

I'll talk till the day I die, but I'm not bothered about being a public figure. To talk to boring stupid people every day and try and extract some gem of beauty, truth or wisdom out of them? Too selfish."

Yes, she enjoys the new wave of profane comics working in America, which might be seen as the acceptable face of Lunch: "But that's not my job, to make them laugh while I make them cry. My natural wit and good humour I'll keep for more intimate circumstances. People miss my punchlines, anyway. Jabbing, giggling, irritating, that's what interests me."

Oral Fixation is certainly a virtuoso display. If it's scripted—and every word is—isn't it hard not to slip up as she reads?

"Of course not! I talk every day! When I write for a show, I nag myself to death for maybe six months in advance—which is why I do so few of these shows—and the music part is rattling it off. The other 90% is nagging. You just get up there and shout as loud and as long as possible, get paid as much as possible and get the hell out of there, hoping you did some damage."

Oh, she's not so terrible, good citizens.

"In spite of my character, I am a very private and solitary person," she says, brushing aside a rust-orange lock. "I go off every year for months by myself, chronically solitary, reading and writing. I wish I could afford to do nothing but. I love to talk to people, but one at a time. That way I can do all the talking. That's just the other half of the exhibitionist, protagonist, confrontationalist, antagonist. . . .

"I'm completely optimistic! I know the end is coming! I'm not a dour person. I'm hateful, but I'm not completely horrible. It's just that I find it a FUCKING JOKE! I have to laugh at it. It's just my stubbornness that makes me see the humour in it. I'm like the last living human cockroach, standing on the rubble heap."

Lydia Lunch. God bless the humanist.

Oral Fixation is on *Widowspeak*, distributed by Rough Trade.



kollektief

calls

From the Instant

Composers Pool to

Brecht, Mozart and more, Willem

Breuker has radicalised all European

music. Ben Watson checks out his

wardrobe. Photo by Mark Douet.

WILLEM BREUKER is an astute musical agitator with an undying hatred of mystification and the maudlin. His music has the blunt insight and informed savagery of European artists like Georg Grosz and Hans Haacke, a deliberate and politicised assault on bourgeois romanticism. His *Kollektief* (a ten-piece of superlative post-free musicians) never fails to electrify audiences, reducing them to helpless laughter and standing ovations. He crams eccentric, lopsided dada-music next to tangos, marches and free-form chaos, all delivered with the sort of chilling precision the Vienna Art Orchestra is famous for. Breuker does not like anything straight, sniffing out the secret subservience implied by respect, always puncturing and degrading the lofty claims of art. He is also obsessed with music.

"I was born in '44 in the east part of Amsterdam, the working class area. The circumstances in Holland were very bad after the Second World War. When I was in school I wanted to play the piano, but there was no money for that. We had the Labour Music School where I learned to read notes, play the recorder, then after two or three years you got a chance to play the clarinet, and that was the beginning – I was 11, 12 years old."

The young Breuker could not tolerate authority.

"I was always too lazy to turn the page when I had to do my exercises – I went on, improvising. I was more interested in the things I could play: also the wrong notes, the strange sounds you could make on the instrument, and if you could repeat them, or a wrong sound forbidden by the teacher. That was more interesting for me than turning the pages and

playing all these exercises."

When a musician's boyhood liking for The Beatles is considered worthy of remark (*Wire* 54), it is time to consider the implications of an immediate response to the music of dissonance and shock. Breuker's eyes sparkled as he described the first time he heard atonal music.

"When I was 12, 13 years old you could listen to music in the National Library in Amsterdam. They'd bring you to a room and put on a record. I heard Arnold Schoenberg and Edgard Varese for the first time – I was completely shocked. I had a paper-round, earning maybe ten or 15 guilders a week, and the first record I bought was a Schoenberg, a string quartet with the Juilliard. I played it over and over, I was so shocked by the music. My family thought I was mad!"

Breuker struck out on his own, composing works that no one would play. He listened to the radio, absorbing music without regard to categories, and also joined a marching band. The street was his school. "We had brass orchestras, mandolin and glockenspiel orchestras, the barrel organ coming once a week." As the 50s economic boom took, the Amsterdam influence started.

"When things became a little better everyone started playing Dixieland. Then it was Art Blakey music, Modern Jazz Quartet, the music that was in at that time. Then came the first John Coltrane music with two chords, you know, and shit like that. We're talking about 1961, 1962."

MEETING PLAYERS like Misha Mengelberg made Breuker realize he was not alone.

"If you talk to Misha Mengelberg you'll find that he also wanted to play something else but he couldn't find the musicians either. He freaked out also at that time, the beginning of the 60s, when he was playing his piano. He sometimes did very strange things, and the rhythm section would stop playing because they thought he'd had a blackout. Then of course he met Han Bennink, and things went much better."

In 1966 Breuker created a national scandal by organising a 23-strong orchestra (comprising both classical and jazz players) to play his *Litany* at Loodsrecht, commemorating an important on-going strike in which a protestor had died after clashes with the police.

"The next day I was on the front pages of the Dutch papers – this was barbarism, this is the end of the music! At the beginning of the 70s we organised the Orchestra Volharding with the Dutch composer Louis Andriessen, and then we were playing at all these meetings, at all these strikes. We were more on the streets than we were inside. Socialism brought a lot of good things to us in this century – unlike the Church, but that is another question. Before May '68 in Paris there was the Provo movement in Amsterdam. I wasn't a member but I worked with them and wrote music for them, but they didn't understand because they were more involved in, shall I say, Rolling Stone music, more in the pop field."

In 1967 Breuker, Mengelberg and Bennink set up the Instant Composers Pool, and made important international contacts – with German vibist Gunther Hampel and England's Derek Bailey and Evan Parker. Breuker's views on the period are instructive. At first it was necessary to exclude the dilettantes and "non-musicians" who dabbled in free jazz, but in 1974 Breuker became annoyed by these restrictions, leaving the ICP to set up BVHaast (which translates as Do-It-Quick Inc, or Fast Records). During this period he also set up a union for improvisers – the BIM – whose chairmanship he has only recently relinquished after 15 years of hard work.

"Bennink and Mengelberg had the idea that we could only play with first class musicians and the rest we don't like to listen to. But I think the world is not like that, it's different. I brought in rangers, I brought in matches, I brought in a lot of styles that don't 'belong' in the music, to tease the people all the time."

This is Breuker's anti-romanticism talking, suspicious of ideological commitment to free improvisation as "truth". He admitted Mengelberg's response to the German Radio's attempt to "buy" free jazz.

"They bought free jazz and then they got no free jazz, they got something completely different – like Mengelberg sitting at the piano smoking, reading a newspaper, not playing the piano at all when they were broadcasting. Insane things like that – it's more important than them buying your screaming free jazz."

Asked if he actually enjoys the rangers he plays, he replies, "Of course. But if I don't enjoy it, that's not important either – the most important thing is how the whole musical idea is

coming over to people, and what you have in mind. With Brecht you get the most lyrical things, Weill or Eisler use musical forms but they do something with it. They might sound romantic, as if you're in an operetta or whatever, but it means something: it's placed in a context. It's often so false."

This is the vocabulary of unrepentant modernism, which unmasks defence of "simple" pleasures as complacency and hypocrisy. Paradoxically, though, the *Kollektief* is a lot of fun: improvisatory angst is pilloried as ideological blather, and the audience is in stitches.

THERE ARE many straightforward pleasures to be derived from seeing the present-day *Kollektief*. Arjen Gorter's bass is amazingly dark and fluid, mockingly *there*; altoist Andre Goudbeek is a hidden treasure (like Marshall Allen in Sun Ra's Arkestra); Andreas Altenfelder plays rippingly original trumpet; pianist Henk De Jong manages to cross from style to style without ever sounding superficial. Indeed, everyone packs such venom you cannot quite believe the circus can be so livid. The clowning is occasionally tiresome: they are still doing the "let's try and stop the drum solo" after ten years; the Arab and Japanese sections are more Bob Hope than Bill Laswell – but suddenly a solo whips you around with its energy or you find yourself laughing uncontrollably at some idiotic slapstick.

As a denial of pop, Breuker takes some beating. All his sources – hard pop, free jazz, march bands, minimal music, cabaret, Brecht/Weill/Morricone – deny *electricity*, the peculiar generation-wat or out-hipping that electric sound implies. It is the very opposite of Miles Davis's take on Prince or the Acid Jazz fraternity's use of house and rare groove. Breuker's deconstruction prohibits soul and dread: in this he differs from Zappa, a comparison common with American critics (though Breuker's celebratory insistence on the mechanics of effect, the hatred for manipulation and religion, make the comparison tempting). Breuker's music often has the all-together-now-gala-in-the-park feel of *Sergeant Pepper* Beatles. The absurdist avantgarde gestures are now showcased crowd-pleasing, but it remains very funny, and thought-provoking.

More exposure would surely give the *Kollektief* huge commercial success – I for one would welcome it, if only so that more people I knew could witness this strange combination of bland good times and radical cynicism. (That he tours as "jazz" is inappropriate and stifling.)

Guessing that Breuker's materialist politics would respond well to a question framed to upset the "clothes-are-not-music" muso-idealist, my last question was (of course): Where do you buy your shirts?

"I have them made. My girlfriend's sister Marjan makes all my shirts. I only buy the material. I have a different shirt everyday, sometimes change twice or three times. (Pulling out one exotic outrage after another from his suitcase) It's always the same cut. I'm a shirt freak. The band are always making fun of me, saying I'm like an 18-year-old, wearing multi-coloured hippie clothes. Let them laugh!"



J I M H A L L . . . before he grew his hair and changed his name to Darryl.

Archive photo by B I L L W A G G

soundcheck

Gaye burning the month:

miles davis,

brass fantasy,

keith jarrett,

hank jones

Plus sonic fireworks from:

a box of **evan parker** sparklers,

a **chadbourne** racket racket,

and a fiery **krakatau**

Plus: cage fails to ignite and the factory classroom explodes!

MILES DAVIS

AURA
(CBS 463351)Recorded: Copenhagen, February–March 1985
*Intro, White, Yellow, Orange, Red, Green, Blue, Elastic
Red, Indigo, Violet.*Miles Davis, Benny Rosenfeld, Palle Mikkelborg,
Palle Boivig, Jean Winther, Perry Knudsen, Idrees
Saleman (t, fltn), Vincent Nilsson, Jens Engel,
Ture Larsen (tb), Ole Kurt Jansen (bb), Jesper
Thiiko, Per Carsten, Uffe Karikow, Bent Jaedig,
Flemming Madsen (trbds), Niels Ege (ob, cor),
Thomas Clausen, Ole-Koch Hansen, Kenneth
Knudsen (ky), Lillian Thörnqvist (hpf), John
McLaughlin, Bjørne Røppe (g), Niels Pedersen, Bo
Snef (b); Lennart Grunstedt (d), Vince Wilburn
(cl-d); Marilyn Mazur, Ethan Wenigard (perc); Eva
Thyssen (v).

SO HERE it is at last, the album Davis recorded, apparently in magnanimous mood, following his receipt of the Sonning Music Prize of 1984. Palle Mikkelborg's composition is spread lavishly across four rather short sides of vinyl; as you may already have heard, The Prince of Darkness responds to it with some of his best playing of recent years.

As a single entity, Mikkelborg's score isn't always completely convincing. While there is the literally nominal theme of ten notes based on M-I-L-E-S D-A-V-I-S to act as a sustaining core, the music's rather modestly episodic. Technofunk, reggae, blues, vertical impressionism: maybe Mikkelborg felt he had to tick off all the styles to keep Miles interested. "Intro", "Orange" and the two versions of "Red" are cut from similar cloth at least, Wilburn's drums programmed with icypick crispness, the orchestra brooding as the back while the rhythm stiffly struts.

But the record is so attractive from moment to moment, and such a departure for Davis, that you finally don't much care if it hangs together or not. For all his blather about 'constantly changing', Miles hasn't gone into that much unknown territory in the last 20 years: finding him in a setting which mixes snowbound ECM desolation, glittering neon funk and futuristic blues is pretty far out, even if anyone who remembers Terje Rypdal's *Odysey* and *What Comes After* will recognise some of these patterns.

"White", opening on a sombre, skirting oboe, becomes a locked, empty room with Miles crying to himself and hearing the echo back; "Yellow" then repeats the theme in a stark and towering orchestration. Hints of Gil Evans here, whom Mikkelborg studied with,

but you can hear that influence more clearly in the sliding brass of "Red". Off a rhythm that sounds weirdly like Pete Ubu's "Blow Daddy-O", Miles digs deep into his darkest bag on open horn – it's a beautiful statement. "Green" is the Evans piece for Miles which Gil never finally got around to writing, and when Pedersen trades lines with the trumpeter, there's somehow a thrill which you don't get off Davis's American records. "Violet" is a bunch of impenetrable chords, where McLaughlin (superb on all three of his appearances here) and Miles stalk the spaces and end up with a 1999 blues.

This was a vintage period for the trumpeter, as anyone who saw the 1984–85 band will remember, and his contributions to "Red", "Orange" and "Violet" sound like the best Miles on disc since at least *Daisy* and probably



much further back than that. Interesting to speculate on how the record was actually put together – the notes hint that Miles may have laid down much of his stuff without knowing what would be behind him – but as it stands it's a fascinating one-off. Maybe the Scandinavian long dark night of the soul is closer to the uptown blues than we ever realised.

MIKE FISH

BUTCHER/DURRANT/LOVENS/
MALFATTI/RUSSELL
NEWS FROM THE SHEED
(ACTA ACTA 4)Recorded: London, 22 Feb '89
*News From The Sheed, The Galsdab, The Raver,
Kalebasu; Everything Stops For Tea, Sickie And Stomach;
Waves; Whistling; Mean Time, Pepper's Ghost.*Radu Malfatti (trb, zither and accessories); John
Butcher (ss, ts); Phil Durrant (vn, electronic); John
Russell (g), Paul Lovens (d, perc, saw).

PINDROP TIME. The music two minutes into *News From The Sheed* couldn't be quieter. With Russell's unmistakable soundless explosions of fragmentary unvoiced guitar – the quietest element – as inspiration and direction, this quintet never rise to force or volume to make their points. "Everything Stops For Tea" almost isn't there at all.

They're uncommonly laconic, as well: long mastery or else masterly intuition help them never to overburden an idea with its clumsy exposition – a touch, and they're onto something new. They're control freaks, formally and physically. Endings are so spectral, so minutely signalled, that they're uncanny.

Improvisation in London is fallen on lean times – as less as any it's known in 25 years. If you wanted to be romantic, you could make a case for the music on this record (and that on *Comets*, Acta's LP Of The Year last year) as a sound-pointing of sonic resourcefulness in a thin season. In purely practical terms, equipment's cheaper, etc. You find what you want in the Kitchen; you can record it there, too.

But the necessary concentration has uncovered something more than ways of saving money where there isn't any way. Microscopic, minimalist, dirty Abstract Expressionism. Or something. Remember that pin? Did you happen to notice the Jackson Pollock painted on the head of it? The mystically-inclined would argue it hardly matters who's aware of it, as long as it's been done. Maybe so. Personally speaking, I think the only satisfactory acknowledgement of something like this is crowds of people pushing each other out of the way to purchase the record. Go for it.

MARK SINKER

KREISLER STRING ORCHESTRA
(Factory Classical 226)Recorded: London, March 1988
Benjamin Britten: *Symphony*, *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, *Zouave*; Elton John: *Cartoon*; Johannes Brahms: *Waltzes*; *Waltzes*.
18 piece string orch, with harpsichord on *Cartoon*.ROBIN WILLIAMS
(Factory Classical 236)Recorded: Petersham, June 1988
Francis Poulenc: *Sonata*, Benjamin Britten: *Six*

Metamorphosis; Paul Hindemith. *Sonata*, Lullier:
Prelude and Variations
Robin Williams (ob), Julian Kelly (p)

DUKE STRING QUARTET (Factory Classical 246)

Recorded: Buckinghamshire, 20–22 December
1988
Dmitri Shostakovich. *String Quartet No. 8*; Michael
Tippett. *String Quartet No. 3*.
Louisa Fuller, Martin Smith (vln); John Metcalfe
(va); Ivan McCready (clo)

ROLF HIND

(Factory Classical 256)

Recorded: London, no date
György Ligeti. *Etude Livre*; Steve Martland:
Krakalot; Elliott Carter. *Piano Sonata*.
Rolf Hind (p).

STEVE MARTLAND

(Factory Classical 266)

Recorded: The Hague, 18 February 1989; Snape,
Suffolk, 26 March 1989
Babi Yar. Residentie Orkest of Den Haag.
Drill: Gerard Bouwhuis and Cees Van Zoeland (p).

THE MANIFESTO: a classical repertoire for
"aspirational youth" finally jaded with post-
indie, post everything, *nada*, but not ready to
risk its cred-heavy hide under either infra-New
Age or ultra-experimental.

One experiment, though: does old(ish)
music come over fresh if entrusted to fresh
players? Factory Communications' classical de-
but covers an unexpected spectrum from the
"punk" (why do they keep saying that?) ferocity
of rising star Steve Martland to Brahms, of
all things.

Brahms, though, is where the modern
movement begins and *Wir Wandeln*, teased
up with two of Britten's more deceptively
cheery and fundamentally anarchic composi-
tions (Zoean Eric's *Cartoon* fits in without a
stylistic wobble, sure sign of expert program-
ming!) ideally paves the way for Martland's
furious two-piano *Drill*, after which his Test
Depe collaboration needs no further comment,
and the powerfully emotional *Babi Yar*, where
two orchestras, guitar and synths thunder out
an affirmation that, whatever George Steiner
thinks, humanity didn't come to a dead stop in
the death camps.

I can't think I've ever picked up a more
suggestively constructed set of new music
recordings. *Babi Yar* inevitably suggests Shos-
takovich, and though the *Symphony No. 13*

isn't there (the Kreischer were formerly the
Manchester String Orch.), the Russian's
Op. 110 String Quartet No. 8 from the previous
year is, splendidly played by the Duke String
Quartet (who featured on Morrisey's *Viva
Hate!*). It's with *Quartet No. 3* by Michael Tip-
pett, who once, in *The Knot Garden*, brought
howlingly amplified guitar into an orchestra
score, which brings us back to Martland.

He reappears on Rolf Hind's vaguely un-
satisfactory set alongside Elliott Carter and
György Ligeti. *Krakalot* – meaning "distance"
– is reminiscent of Akin Euba's "African
pianism" experiments, though Martland may
be thinking of Takemitsu's *Distance* (a classic of
modern oboc literature, to be recommended to
the excellent Robin Williams) or *Piano Dis-
tance*.

Williams's playing is equal to the slippery



and protean attitudes of Britten's *Metamorphosis*
from Ovid. Poulenc I can't abide, but the
romanticism is in check and the Hindemith is
a plus, all part of his increasing revival.

What, then, of the challenge? How do these
young players stand up to odious comparison?
On the Tippett, the Duke are up against the
Lindsay and Arditti quartets and come out
strongly, if a little unsure in the slower
passages: a venial flaw with the Tippett is an
outright mismatch on the Shostakovich,
which is about as desolate a piece of music as
the century offers (Martland's *Babi Yar* is
decidedly upbeat in comparison) and needs an
altogether more stringent reading.

I'm not convinced that the Kreischer's collec-
tivist, conductorless structure pays off suffi-
ciently to mitigate some of the rawness but I
am convinced of the rightness of Factory's

strategy. Excellent music, imaginatively play-
ed in provocative contexts; if the sleeve notes
are depressingly banal, the sleeves themselves
are typically imaginative and a signal advance
on the cheesy DG, Decca or Hyperion. Buy the
lot.

BRIAN MORTON

GERI ALLEN

TWYLIGHT
(Minor Music 1014)

Recorded: New York. No date given
When Kabuya Dances, *Shadow Series*, *Skin*, *A Place Of
Power*, *Twilight*, *Stop The World, Wood*, *Little Wind*,
Dream Time, *Blue* (Series II); *Black Pools*.
Geri Allen (ky); Jaribu Shahid (b); Tami Tabbal (d).
With: Sadiq Bey, Eli Fountain (perc); Clarence Taylor
Bell (v).

THERE IS a lot of music here, on what may be
Geri Allen's most concentrated recording to
date. It's been more than two years since her
excellent *Open On All Sides* (Minor Music MM
1013) and although she's been in evidence on
Greg Osby's *Mindgame*, on Paul Motian's
Moak In Motion and on a collaborative record
with Moan and Charlie Haden called *In The
Year Of The Dragon* (all of the aforementioned
are available on JMT), there's some catching
up to do as regards her composing. *Twilight*
concludes with a track called "Black Pools"
which should have been the title track of a
Nonessuch album last year. But that record was
never finished, for Allen allegedly fell out with
the New York company who wanted to modify
her musical direction . . . It seems that for an
American jazz musician to say what he or she
wants to say, it is still necessary to broadcast
via European channels. Hence this German
release, Allen's fourth for Stephan Meyner's
Cologne-based label.

Ideally, all four records should be heard in
sequence, for they trace a complex story. The
opening cut here, "When Kabuya Dances",
revisits a piece heard on *The Printmakers*, a tri-
album with Anthony Cox and Andrew Cyrille,
and it was a fine, strong piece in the debut
version, too. Now, as Allen has a better grip
on her abilities in arrangement, there is more
subtlety in the delivery; it is really dancing.
The rhythm springs from the piano, working
up to a climax that puts me in mind of both
Tyner and Hilton Ruiz, although Allen sounds
like neither. But she is such an assured pianist,
and her left hand so strongly establishes the



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percussive climate of her music, that her trio partners Shahid and Tabbal (both ex-Roscoe Mitchell men) are called upon more frequently to orchestrate the songs rather than perform strictly traditional rhythm section functions. Tabbal, in particular, does very well here, using a light skipping touch that details the pieces without cluttering them. On "Skin" he embroiders the sound through some tricky changes of mood, as the piano charges from a speeding Afro-Cuban rhythm into dense Cecil Taylor-ish swirl.

But control is a key word here. At every step of the way, one feels that Allen knows exactly what she wants this music to do. The Taylor-like "out" sections (less now than a few years ago) are there for functional, textural, compositional reasons. She is not the kind of player who aims to "be a force of nature" or elevate us to trance. Yet she also avoids the wistful romantic melancholy of Jarrett and his clones. She shifts and rearranges the history of jazz from the blues onward and makes less heavy weather of it than any of her contemporaries, the recombining of elements never suggesting a self-conscious or self-congratulatory post-modernism. This is bright, alert music, completely cliché-free. There is a rightness to it which is a good deal easier to feel than to write about. All her judgements seem sound. Acoustic pianists usually find taste deserting them when they touch electronic instruments, but Allen brings synthesizers into her music with the utmost discretion; no one could quibble with the sensitive colouration brought to bear on "Black Pools", "Twylight" and "Little Wind". "Shadow Series" incorporates a story-lyric by Allen, sung by Clarice Taylor Bell. On the printed page, the words reveal a hint of sentimentality, but the darkness of the music and the angularity of the vocal line contrive a balancing act. Once again the elements lock into place.

STEVE LAKE

EVAN PARKER
COLLECTED SOLOS
(Boxed set, numbered edition of 200)
Recorded: Berlin, 9 September 1974
Aerobatics
Recorded: London, 17 June 1975
Aerobatics 1-3
Recorded: Monmouth, 30 April 1978
Monoceros 1-4
Recorded: London, 18 June 1980

One Of Six; Two Of Six; Three Of Six; Four Of Six; Five Of Six; Six Of Six
Recorded: Oxford, 30 January 1985
The Snake Decides; Leaving Fully; Barnden's Az; Haver's Last Tape
Evan Parker (ss).

LISTENING to the previously unreleased solos which comprise "Aerobatics 5-14" reminded me of the almost physical shock I experienced when I first heard Evan in a solo concert. Just Gebens's studio sound is dryly aggressive, pushing Parker right in your face, and the mostly brief pieces (the shortest runs for eight seconds) rekindle the excitement of first hearing this sometimes unearthly sound, a saxophone music far beyond even Albert Ayler's holy dervish wail. These are, perhaps, experimental snippets, with Parker teaching himself what he can do in a studio, but so



much of his style is already in place — the multiphonic jigsaw, the tortuous yet inevitable momentum that drives one instant into the next — that these pieces can be happily included in what is a body of work which is humbling in its breadth and intensity.

The box collects all four of Parker's solo records for Incus, the label he co-runs no longer. It's perhaps iniquitous to choose between them for relative excellence, since all of the music is, as has been frequently remarked, pieces of the same lifetime's work, chips from the same trunk. "Monoceros 1" continues to strike me as possibly Parker's greatest single statement in the studio, a gargantuan solo which proceeds to a mid-point of extraordinary tension and is then redeveloped into an even greater, finer complexity. The *Six Of Six* solos are given a ripper acoustic and seem more

approachable as a result; the opening blast of "The Snake Decides" sounds like Parker throwing himself a gauntlet and then drawing a landscape out of that first foray. The technique in this solo is so consummate that one wonders if the saxophone can be compelled to go any further.

Handsomely packaged in a black box with a booklet containing a splendidly unlikely sequel to Paul Haines's notes for *Saxophone Solos*, this is an essential document of where the music has moved to since Albert Ayler.

MIKE FISH

RAOUL BJÖRKENHEIM & KRAKATAU RITUAL (KR Records 1)

Recorded: Helsinki, 1988
Foot Talk; La Liana, Murosal, Epilog; Go, Dog Hank; Ritual, What, New Day, Ray
Raoul Björkenheim (g, perc), Jorma Tapio (ss, bcl, bl, perc), Tapani Banne (ts, bs, fl), Sampo Lassila (b), Heiko "Lefty" Lehto & Michel Lambert (d).

THOSE WHO adhere to the notion of a "spirit of place" informing art will have trouble placing *Ritual*, for it sounds like no known Finland. Nordic cool is at a premium here. The ritual in question could be the exorcism of all the adjectives that leap to mind when "jazz" and "Scandinavia" are paired off. There's not much landscape-painting here. No drifting glaciers, snow-still nights, or winds buffeting the tundra. Guitarist Björkenheim and freedman Tapio have paid their dues in that zone, working with the man who does it best, composer/drummer Edward Vesala. Refer to 1987's *Lama*, where both musicians solo compellingly. *Ritual*, though, is a hotter, more raw proposition, expressionistically blowing the lid off Finnish stoicism. It is very exciting.

"Foot Talk" is the most invigorating and celebratory piece of music I've heard all year. Guitar strumming a big chord while the horns shake with religious zeal, bursting with passion like Ayler on "Our Prayer". Then a dramatic contraction in sound that's shattered by erupting drums. Lehto and Lambert play flat-out, with a pummeling physicality, purposefully avoiding the cymbals. Björkenheim overdubs a talking drum and the rhythm hits flat gallop. Themes and solos swarm deliciously overhead. Tapio and Ranne play marvellously together in long, singing, zigzagging lines and Tapio has a tremendous alto solo that

bounces over the rhythm with great cunning, dipping in and out of a melody that Ornerte would be proud of. Yes, Prime Time and the Decoding Society have to be mentioned here, as signposts for the uninitiated only, for Krakatau can't be written off as copyists. Prime Time, and roush as I admit them, have never made a record as focussed as *Ritual*, and Björkenheim's writing reverts comparison with Shannon Jackson's best ("Eye On You", "Decode Yourself", "Tabu").

Björkenheim's guitar style leans heavily towards feedback and distortion; his solo on "New Day" is a metal poem. Elsewhere, he churns up the ensemble texture, rumbling beneath Tapio's bass flute or colliding with Rinne's blasting baritone. . . . In short, this is a vital and important record signalling the arrival of some world-class talents. Raul Björkenheim and Jorma Tapio. Remember the names.

STEVE LAKE

LESTER BOWIE'S BRASS FANTASY SERIOUS FUN

(DIW-834 (CD), DIW 8035 (LP))
Recorded: New York, 4, 5, 6 April 1989
Papa's Got A Brand New Bag, *Smooth Operator*, *Inland*, *Taxi*, *Da Butt*, *God Bless The Child*, *Don't Worry Be Happy*, *Strange Fruit*,
Bowie, Stanton Davis, E.J. Allen, Gerald Briscoe (tr); Vincent Chancey (th), Steve Turner, Frank Lacy (tb); Bob Stewart (ts), Vinnie Johnson, Ken Caillat (dr); Famousoud Don Moye (perc).

A REVIEW I once wrote of the first Brass Fantasy album included the fairly unstartling contention that Bowie's affection for the earliest methods of playing jazz was pretty clear on it. Apparently on the strength of what seemed to be a celebration of trad, a woman bought the record as a birthday present for her husband, and then fired off an indignant letter once they'd both played it. The upshot of the correspondence was that such a collection of tin-eared posers as this wouldn't recognise a traditional virtue if they fell over it. But traditional virtues, remoulded rather than reproduced, are Bowie's stock-in-trade.

Since that time, the band that represents the commercial wing of the trumpeter's multifarious activities has grown increasingly knowing and sophisticated, and its root detracable of the jazz tradition now lies in rich horn voicings reminiscent, more than anyone, of Gil

Evans in his pre-electric phase. Bowie is sometimes dismissed as a musical ironist who can't play anything without making it sound sardonic, and it's true that very little of his trumpet playing on this disc passes by without the now obligatory shovelful of half-valve sounds and determined avoidance of pitch.

But Bowie's playing is not a helpless obsession with taking the piss. His vocabulary of wails, guffaws, shouts and sly, curling notes is on its way to becoming as honed to bare essentials as Monk's adjacent-note clangs and drum-like repetition. Unlike Monk, however, the effect in Bowie's case is nowadays more effective when heard in ensemble rather than as solos (his solos are too similar to each other) and it's the collective material on this disc that really demonstrates the strengths of Brass Fantasy. There are Gil Evans' churchy brass



effects on "Smooth Operator", driving funk on "Da Butt" (the band proving through the interlocking rhythmic patterns of the trombones' bass riff and the trumpets' blurred high sounds that funk in good hands barely needs drums), a buoyant slow bounce on "Don't Worry Be Happy" and some terrifying instrumental effects on "Strange Fruit", a brooding, semi-abstract piece full of agonised cries from the high brass that genuinely refashions one of jazz music's most personalised classics.

JOHN FORDHAM

JOHN CAGE
THE FIRST MEETING OF THE SATIE
SOCIETY THE SOCIE SATIETY THE SOZI
SATTITAT THE SOCIE SOCIETY THE
SOZI SATTITAT

(Edition Michael Frauenlob Bauer
MFB 014-015)

Recorded: Bonn, 31 March 1985
John Cage (v), Klaus Schöning (v); Amy Leverenz
(vi), Greete Wehmeyer (p); Bonn Ensemble for New
Music.

JOHN CAGE
EMPTY WORDS PART IV
(Edition Michael Frauenlob Bauer
MFB 003-004)

Recorded: Cologne, 4 September 1984
John Cage (v).

JOHN CAGE's status as one of the most influential figures in 20th century music (not just composition, not just rousic, for that matter) is pretty well assured. But the prepared piano music, "Music Of Changes", "4'33", "HPSCHD" and the rest have been around for some time; Cage, now in his late 70s, is still producing voluminously and hasn't relaxed into recantation of any of his convictions regarding the annihilation of personal taste and memory in his work. So what more is possible given his exhaustive exploration in the 50s and 60s of this Zen-inspired non-aesthetic? Firstly let it be said that those vestiges of his musical personality which creep in unnoticed are characteristic and pervasive: a piece by John Cage is always exactly that, in sound and concept. The beautiful "Ryoanji" for voice and percussion of 1983 could be the product of nothing other than an exquisite sense of dynamic immobility (worth searching out, on a double album with "Etudes Boreales"). So it is, up to a point, with these new releases, produced and presented with exemplary attention to detail, but with more equivocal results.

"Empty Words" dates from 1975. Its four parts consist each of an aleatoric assemblage of fragments from the Journals of Henry David Thoreau (a long-held enthusiasm of Cage's) in units of phrases, words, syllables and letters, each part after Part I omitting the first category of the previous one, so that Part IV consists of ten pages (in the original publication) of random letters, grouped into loose "stanzas" but generally interspersed with a great deal of blankness. Cage's performance lasts two and a half hours and also contains a great deal of blankness: what we have is the endpoint of "a transition from language and rousic" by which time all meaning has been sifted out and Cage's voice wavers on the edge of silence,

between speaking and (somewhat Japanese-inflected) singing, like an oracle of emptiness. Or perhaps it's just unutterably tedious, an estimation which Cage (who is nothing if not irritatingly disingenuous, like a cross between Andy Warhol and the Buddha) would no doubt cheerfully acknowledge as being as valid as any other response.

"The First Meeting of the Sane Society . . ." presents Cage reading a series of mesostics (like acrostics but with the hidden word down the middle) on Sane titles, Klaus Schöning in the character of Satie, speaking words by him (in German), nine intermittently-present solo songs by Cage (in no particular language) and several ensembles simultaneously playing pieces from Satie's protomimicist "Musique d'ameublement" offstage. If Cage wishes to celebrate his love of Satie's work there are less self-indulgent ways of doing it; nothing in these 90 minutes sheds any more light on Satie than Cage has done in his earlier writings. The light it sheds on Cage is inevitably unflattering: he comes over as a long-spent force, marking time in declining years with ill-conceived and overextended trifling, abusing his (initially at least deserved) position in the musical world behind a façade of bemused indifference. (Nothing unique about him there, of course.) But again I dare say he might not disagree, if asked.

RICHARD BARRETT

HANK JONES BLUESETTE

(Black and Blue CD 233168)

Recorded: London, 22 July 1979 and Miraval, France, 17 July 1979
Bluesette, Blue And Sentimental, Naima's Mood, Blues In My Heart, Things Ain't What They Used To Be, Alone, Down, St James Infirmary, A Foggy Day, Angel Face, Hank's Blues
 Jones (p); George Duvivier (b); Alan Dawson (d).

HANK JONES is an architect of pure piano-sound. On the Benny Carter song "I'm Left With The Blues In My Heart" he dissolves the pathos of the famous Carter-Tatum interpretation and creates a baroque structure of blues filigree that transforms the original. "Things Ain't What They Used To Be" ain't the joyful groove it used to be, and takes on instead a magisterial quality. Urbane, elegant, poised, the peerless pianist hardly puts a finger wrong, yet comes out sounding fresh and spontaneous.

The CD is a re-mastering of a complete album recorded in London and three numbers from a French session. Half the numbers are 12-bars and most of the rest could not have existed without the blues. Don't be put off by the daunting perfection. This is playing with depth and feeling even if Hank doesn't wear those qualities on his sleeve. He's in heavy company here, too. George Duvivier creates an effortless pulse; Alan Dawson, perhaps not called upon to be as demonstrative as usual, displays his impeccable taste and thoughtful solo-work. Like Art Taylor (and Errol Garner) he plays very much on top of the beat, which makes a nice change.

The two piano solo numbers are among the best on the disc. "Blue And Sentimental", the almost improvisatory Bessie melody that Herschel Evans made his own, emerges still blue



Photo © 1979 by [illegible]

but no longer quite so sentimental, as a gentle reverie far removed from the huge-toned playing on the original. On "St James Infirmary" — that gloomy number is by one Joe Primrose always raises a chuckle — the pianist communes quietly with himself. For grief and despair, check out the classic Earl Hines version from his 60s comeback, such open displays are not Hank's way. Listen twice, and it becomes clear these recordings set a standard of excellence in piano jazz.

ANDY HAMILTON

JOHN HICKS QUARTET NAIMA'S LOVE SONG (DIW-8023)

Recorded: Tokyo, April 1988
Elementary My Dear Watson, Sunday Sinner, Soul Eyer, On The One, Post-Up House, Naima's Love Song.

John Hicks (p), Bobby Watson (as); Curtis Lundy (b); Victor Lewis (d).

JOHN HICKS AND RAY DRUMMOND TWO OF A KIND (Teresa TR 128)

Recorded: San Francisco, 1988
I'll Be Around, Take The Calmness, Very Early; Getting Sentimental Over You, For Heaven's Sake, Come Rain Or Come Shine, A Rose Without A Thorn, Without A Song.
 John Hicks (p); Ray Drummond (b).

JOHN HICKS must be one of the busiest and most versatile of the younger generation of pianists. In recent years, he's worked with Betty Carter, Pharoah Sanders and David Murray. Here, on two strikingly different albums, he presents his own ideas. They turn out to be, in modern jazz terms, straight-forwardly classical.

The Quattet record is admirable, indeed nigh-on faultless — well-recorded, nicely thought-out, and performed with confidence and conviction. The rhythm section is one of the best approximations I have heard in some time to those loose but well-oiled units that flourished in the late 50s. They have, of course, played a lot together (Curtis Lundy, the bassist, is an ex-colleague of Hicks from his Betty Carter days). The musician who catches the ear most of all, however, is the altoist, Bobby Watson. A performer of terrific vim and impressive imaginative stamina, Watson also has the knack of not just reviving past styles — in this case hard bop of the late 50s-early 60s — but also finding something new and interesting to do with them. Here he sticks to Cannonball Adderley/middle period Jackie McLean territory in the main; but in the post-modern, 80s way, he is not absolutely tied down to a specific period, but able to nod at will to any segment of the alto tradition from Hodges to Anthony Braxton. I have never heard him sound to better advantage than on this recording.

On the duet record the spotlight is more firmly on Hicks himself. This is an example of a format favoured by pianists like Hank Jones, Jimmy Rowles and Tommy Flanagan — Flanagan released a particularly gorgeous example a few years ago (*You're Mr. Phantasm* 7528, with Red Mitchell on bass). The genre, for which I confess I'm a sucker, calls for an intimate atmosphere, a sympathetic bassist and hand-picked material. Hicks' album has all three. He and Ray Drummond, who wrote

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the admiring sleeve-note, have worked together frequently, and obviously know each other's styles inside out. The repertoire – some Alec Wilder, a Harold Arlen, an out-of-the-way Ellington, a couple of standards – is par for the course, and, as far as I'm concerned, just right. It must be admitted, I suppose, that Hicks doesn't yet have quite the aplomb of Flanagan etc., but at the very least his performance is extremely promising and highly enjoyable.

The only sad thing about the record, in fact, is the recording. Hardly anybody these days seems to know how to record a piano. This isn't as bad as Dick Wellstood's last LP (reviewed by Richard Cook in *Wire* 64), on which the much-lamented Wellstood appeared to be playing a xylophone, but it's bad enough to take a little of the shine off one's enjoyment of the music.

MARTIN GAYFORD

PETER KING CRUSADE

(blanco y negro BYN 19)

Recorded: London 4-9 March 1989

Valdes In The Country, Across the Bridge, My Foolish Heart/My Girl, Blue Monk, Home Before Dark, Little Green

Peter King (as); Damon Butcher (p, syn), Steve Pearce (b), Stephen Sanger (dj), Martin Ditcham (perc).

THIS is the first fruit of Peter King's new collaboration with producer Ben Watt, one half of the pop group Everything But The Girl (as guitarist, organist, arranger and of course producer), whose albums *Eden* and *Idlewild* feature Mr King.

Planned as the record to introduce the altoist to a "wider audience", *Crusade* consists of an easy mix of soft Latin funk and mellow ballads. Unfortunately the disarming naivety of Watt's approach to production (highly effective in the context of Everything But The Girl) is simply not sophisticated enough to support a jazz artist of King's stature. The synthesizer is never used to give the album a strong "sound" but merely to fill out the spaces with the same old twinkles and fake violins. The most positive aspect of the exercise is the brilliance of the leader. On "Valdes In The Country", following a candlelit piano interlude, King blazes to a climax over the Latin rhythm before returning nonchalantly to the theme. The

altoist's fiery inventiveness often seems to isolate him from the pedestrian musical surroundings. Turning "My Foolish Heart" inside out with breathtaking virtuosity, he leaves the pale backing far behind him. "Blue Monk" is played over a slow rap beat and features a fine blues solo from King which recalls the effervescence of Cannonball Adderley. "Across the Bridge" with its wah-wah synth sound is the "funk" contribution; something The Crusaders might have churned out 15 years ago.

I find it hard to imagine who will buy this record. The jazz-funkers will prefer their Najee and Grover Washington; the purists will be sticking to their acoustic King; even the 50s revivalists won't find much to interest them here. Maybe there is no halfway house for those embarking on the commercial trail.

ROLAND RAMANAN



ROBIN HOLCOLMB LARKS, THEY CRAZY (Sound Aspects sas 026)

Recorded: Baby Monster Studio, 12-14 October 1988

New; They Crazy, The Natural World, Thords, Tala! Davenport; Continuity, Marking, March, Dixie; Silence In The Square, Solo.

Doug Westelman (cl, ts), Marty Ehrlich (bcl, as, ss); Wayne Horvitz (syn, ky); Robin Holcomb (p, v); David Holmes (b, tba); Robert Prevate (dj).

IN KAFKA'S *The Trial*, the central character is at one point presented with the options of actual acquittal (which is unheard of), apparent acquittal and postponement. "Apparent acquittal," says the painter, "needs concentrated effort for a while, whereas postponement means there is much less effort expended, but it is expended continuously." In the end, of

course, Josef K. opts for self-abetted judicial execution. After a jaunt through the bleak, Kafkaesque *Weltraumschauung* of Ms Holcomb as evidenced by *Larks, They Crazy*, complicity in one's own demise seems a natural outcome. Locked in a nightmare world of endlessly reiterating cuedential formulae and harmonies austere, spare and unyielding, it comes as some relief to the victim to hear the pianist's eerie voice intoning "Larks / They crazy in this light first light / And I have light this high / Every morning, Death" After expending concentrated effort, and also less effort continuously, the listener is unable to quit the surreal bureaucratic presence of this forbidding music. The dark up tempo "March" merely induces a macabre quick-step of the soul. Every attempt to reach the "off" button is frustrated by a self-destructive inertia.

The music does eventually come to an end, of course. Only in the brief coda of the last track – "Solo" – are we finally acquainted with the merely plangent. Even *The Trial* has its lighter bits (doesn't it?); this album is a trial all the way through.

ANDY HAMILTON

MORTON FELDMAN THREE VOICES (Edition Michael Frauenlob Bauer MFB 002)

Recorded: Köln, 13-16 March and 19 June 1984

Three Voices

Beth Griffith (v).

AMERICA HAS produced several individual and unfollowable figures in contemporary music: Ives, Cage, Nancarrow, Partch, Subotnick, Crumb, and the late Morton Feldman is another. It is works written after about the mid-1970s wherein his genius is revealed – works often on a huge temporal scale and eschewing the indeterminate procedures of his earlier oeuvre.

"Three Voices", written in 1980, is 62 minutes long and largely vocalise. Just four lines of a poem by Frank O'Hara are set, but they are heard many times. All three parts are performed here by one singer, therefore one hears three identical voices. This is the format Feldman regarded as ideal, pre-recorded tapes facilitating live performance. But what of the music? Is it rhythmic or pulseless, repetitive or developmental, tonal or atonal, spare or lush,

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boring or enthralling, emotional or insouciant?

It is all and none of these. To describe the gently shifting hypnotic repetitions of small figures would make it sound like Reich. To discuss the slow merging in and out of different polytonal harmonies would make it sound like Ligeti. It is nothing like either of these or anyone or anything else. It is Feldman; simple and complex, barren and rich, agonising and beautiful – music which toys with, and plays tricks on, the memory and perception.

The work as presented here is a great technical as well as artistic achievement. It is brilliantly sung. Beth Griffith has a voice perfectly suited to this music in its natural, unforced quality and minimal vibrato. There is a disarming and slightly unnerving innocence to the voice, and the seeming ease and painlessness with which the music is sung belies the phenomenal stamina and relentless concentration required.

The lack of broadcasts and recordings of Feldman's work is lamentable in the extreme. One tends to hear more about his music than the music itself. This record enables one to remedy this situation.

STEPHEN HOLMES

ATLAS TRIO IMPROVISATIONS (No label or number)

Recorded: London, 22 January 1989
Thursday The 14th, Free Blues; Nippon; Evidence; Bass And Piano Duo Improvisation; Chords, Dreams, Ties Improvisations Part 1 to 3.
John Law (p), prepared piano, perc; Paul Rogers (b); Mark Sanders (d, perc).

GEORGE HASLAM/PAUL RUTHERFORD 1989 AND ALL THAT (Slam CD301)

Recorded: Oxford, 12 April 1989
S19, ORION; 1977; 1984; Cove Sandey, 1986; SIGMA, London Light; 1989.
George Haslam (tb), Paul Rutherford (tb).

JAZZ and beyond. Two recent recordings spanning at least three or four generations of British free playing.

The Atlas cassette features a mix of jazz pieces and more open-ended improvisation. The jazzier stuff has the intimacy, if not quite the integration, of Herbie Nichols's trios,

though the formal relation of the piano to the rhythm section owes more to Cecil Taylor's early groups. It's a funny instrument is the piano. On the one hand you only need to tap it with your forefinger or whack it with your fist to make a beautiful noise, yet on the other, countless players approach it with a fully developed technique and come out sounding slick, insipid and boring. I find it a difficult instrument to write about, but I have to say that, along with Akemi Kuhn, Pat Thomas and Alex McGuire, Atlas's John Law is amongst the handful of younger Brit-based pianists who I can listen to without falling asleep. My favourite here is the cool, intriguing version of Monk's "Evidence"; it is not clear whether Law's drifting hands are trying to find the tune or lose it.

The freer stuff on side two is the more



interesting, though. Here the rumbling threat of Sanders's drums and howling wisdom of Rogers's bowed bass work as one. If you haven't seen this past play then you should; much more than a rhythm section, they are two of the country's most exciting performers. It is probably fair to say that Law does not speak the language with quite their conviction yet. But, though his playing does sometimes bear the mark of influences like Keith Tippett and Howard Riley, his is an original, developing, living and breathing music.

From the fermenting to the fully matured. Though not normally regarded as a group leader, Rutherford, the original free trombonist, is hardly what you would call a sideman either; his primary form has to be the unaccompanied solo. This CD features two of his long solos, four shorter solos from Haslam and

three duets. On "ORION" and "SIGMA" the mild-mannered Cockney trombonist sings and warbles down the big wobbly horn, showing utter fidelity to the passing idea or direction however perverse it might seem. His openness to moment, and sheer nerve, is quite flabbergasting.

Haslam's solos really emphasise the sheet *bugeyes* of the baritone, but lack Rutherford's originality. They are in a fairly familiar free/boppish style, and tend to be more harmonically and rhythmically formal. And the duets, which seem to throw together two very different senses of order and motion, made me think of two Sumo wrestlers at a ballroom dancing class.

RICHARD SCOTT

The Atlas cassette is available for £4 from John Law, 90 Upper Tollymore Park, London N4 4NB. The Haslam/Rutherford CD from Slam Productions, 3 Thequer Road, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 2DX.

JOE LOVANO QUINTET VILLAGE RHYTHM (Soul Note 121 182-1)

Recorded: New York, 7-9 June 1988
Village Rhythms; Bird Of Springtime; Goin' By; Dewey Sord; Chelsea Rendez-vous; Variations On A Theme; Hi Dreams; T Was To Me - Part 1; Celebration Of Life Everlasting; Part 2: Theme, Sleepy Giant; Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love; Spirit Of The Night.
Joe Lovano (ts, sa, perc); Tom Harrell (tr); Kenny Werner (p); Marc Johnson (b); Paul Motian (d).

ALTHOUGH HE'S recently proved himself at home in fairly free, loose-limbed contexts (Paul Motian's bands, Elvin Jones's Jazz Machine) as well as sophisticated European settings (like Henri Texier's Quartet), Lovano's own LPs tend to be rather more straightforward. As he puts it, "My music is founded on hard bop roots . . . All of my pieces are song forms with free interpretation."

All the same, this album is still full of pleasant surprises. As well as writing extremely good bop tunes (the title track and "Sleepy Giant" in particular), Lovano can also turn his hand to a more expansive sort of melody: "Chelsea Rendez-vous" stands out here for the way it contrives to be memorable (dominated as it is by a haunting, repeated tenor phrase) while allowing sufficient space for Motian and Werner to indulge in some quite anarchic and disruptive dialogues in the background. Mo-

tian is as good as ever, incidentally, and shows his usual self-effacing intuition, which involves knowing exactly when to start complicating things and when just to shut up and hold down the beat.

Two or three things I didn't know about Joe Lovano: for a start, I didn't know he played the drums. Two of the tracks here ("Variations" and "T Was To Me - Part 1") have him blowing the sax over his own overdubbed percussion - including gongs and cymbals, which are part of the global village idea invoked (rather needlessly) to hold the album together. And I didn't know - although I might have guessed - that he sounded so good on soprano: his solo on "His Dreams", a nice exercise in mid-tempo wisefulness, has more warmth and body to it than perhaps any of the tenor solos here except his rapt duet (with Kenny Werner) on the classic Mingus number.

Only the ambitious "T Was To Me" sequence doesn't really come off. Intended as a tribute to Lovano's father, this involves a "setting" for saxophone of a deeply-felt but slightly embarrassing poem by Ron Smith, which is reprinted on the album sleeve. The result is a wandering and forgettable melody which might have had more impact if the words had been sung (although personally I wouldn't encourage it). It seems strangely out of place, anyway, surrounded as it is by tunes which are all, to Lovano's credit, good enough both to stick in the head and to bring out the considerable strengths of his sidemen.

JONATHAN COE

ED JONES QUARTET THE HOMECOMING (Acid Jazz JAZZ 14)

Recorded: London, April 1989

The Homecoming, No White Lines, Two Heads, Sambo Means One.

Jones (s, ss), Geoff Williams (p), Rob Statham (b), Winston Clifford (d); Kevin Haynes (perc on tracks 2 & 4).

IF THE design of the sleeve looks suspiciously like a rip-off of Joe Jackson's *Body And Soul* ripping off Blue Note's *Sunny Rollins Vol 2*, then anybody could be forgiven for thinking the music contained within it is similarly derivative. Add the fact that Ed Jones's four-track, debut mini-LP is recorded on a label that must be firmly at the top of any 'serious' jazz lover's list of *bête noires*, Acid Jazz, and it

would seem we are on for quite a ride.

Yet just as, miraculously, even Chris Parker can be converted to the cause, all is not lost. At the very least, and judged on its own ac-ee-ee-d terms, this is a definite success - unlike Mr Parker, I am young, streetwise and Wag-ish enough to appreciate that side one of this release is sufficiently tough, fast and Latin-tinged to satisfy the most spats-flashing dancefloor feet. Acid jazz may actually, at a stretch, be responsible for bringing more challenging music than Spyrogyra and Kenny G to a clubbound audience.

The leader himself is certainly accomplished enough to work his way around the set, driving bebop melodies and changes - the title track, for example - a Jones original with breaks and bridge sections, is an impressively ambitious opener. And on Williams's fast,

adding an assertive, biting melodic line to Jones's more tentative openings, a bright speediness to the Latin passages and even the occasional dissonant spray to sign off his solos. But Statham and Clifford are similarly confident and versatile.

Reservations aside, Jones's obvious ability, the strength of the compositions and the emphatic cohesion of his band make this a recording that even invites comparison with the assurance of Andy Sheppard's debut. Although he is a long way from being as mature a player as Sheppard was even then, in the already over-burdened market of 'young' British tenor players, that in itself is no mean feat.

PHILIP WATSON

ELTON DEAN

Duos

(Ed Tapes)

Recorded: How Studios, no date.

He Who Dares (w/Mark Hewias, g); *P.R. Department* (w/Paul Rogers, b), *K.T.* (w/Keith Tippett, p); *Small Stride* (w/Paul Rogers), *Oh Really* (w/Marco Mattos, b); *He Who Dares* (w/Hewias). Elton Dean (ss, saxello).

TRIOS

(ED Tapes)

Recorded: How Studios, no date; except *A 3, B 3* live in concert, no date.

Revolutions, Unda, The Return; Rising: One, Reason ED (as, saxello); John Etheridge (g), Fred Thelonius Baker (b), Howard Riley (p), Marco Mattos (b); Keith Tippett (p).

rhythmically-led "No White Lines", Jones handles the more open passages well, fracturing his playing to amply fill up the spaces. Unlike many of his more pyrotechnical peers, the saxophonist uses the bottom end of his horn well - bouncing deeper growls and patterns off the higher speedier registers.

But, as yet, he is not quite there - there's a feeling he is straining at times on this LP, not just with a consistency of tone but to make strong, convincing statements. It's as if the band is carrying him and the mix is such that Jones almost gets lost in the music. Still, if there seems a degree of confusion as to how many it takes to make up a quartet (why are there five players listed? Some mistake . . .), one thing's for certain - Jones has got a great band around him. All are in-demand players. Geoff Williams is especially outstanding,

Two superb sets of improvisations marked by some of the best stuff Dean has recorded with his old oppo Keith Tippett. "K.T." on *Duos* and "The Return" and "Reunion" are both splendidly misleading. *Trios* are both splendid examples of two individuals responding spontaneously to one another's moods and signals. Tippett has now, very literally, got inside his instrument and produces a bewildering quantity of sound from it. Their feel for "the tradition" was evident on the EDQ/Ogun *They All Be On Their Old Road*, "Nanna" particularly, but here they're forging new paths.

The Riley/Mattos trios have a slightly brisker feel to them. It's useful to compare the Brazilian bassist's response, less laid-back than usual, to those of Baker and Rogers, who is a lot more laid-back than his usual ferocious norm. Rogers, currently performing wonders



with Tippett in Mujician, shows he can be meditative as well as explosive.

Erheridge is a player I've never understood but he is on superb form on *True* and contrasts well with Mark Hewins's post-Bailey effects. Hewins is perhaps the revelation of the whole exercise and will be far more widely exposed if there's any justice.

Of course, there isn't. That Elton Dean should after two decades of dedicated and often chankless playing be less than a household name – even in the cosy household of new music – is little short of insulting. He may have chosen to, but he shouldn't have had to release this music in such an uncompromisingly Heath Robinson format.

BRIAN MORTON

To obtain tapes, contact Elton at 7 Farleigh Road, London N16 7TB.

TOMMY FLANAGAN

JAZZ POET

(Timeless SJP 301)

Recorded: 17 & 19 January, 1989

Raincheck, Lament, Willow Weep For Me, Caravan, That Tired 'Tusins Called Love, Glad To Be Unhappy, St Louis Blues, Mean Streets

Tommy Flanagan (p), George Mraz (b), Kenny Washington (d).

KEITH JARRETT TRIO

CHANCELESS

(ECM 1392)

Recorded: USA concert tour, October 1987

Dancing, Endless, Lifeline, Ecstasy

Keith Jarrett (p), Gary Peacock (b), Jack DeJohnette (d).

DON PULLEN

NEW BEGINNINGS

(Blue Note 7917852)

Recorded: New York, 16 December 1988

*Jane's Delight, One Upon A Time, Warriors, New Beginnings, At The Cafe Central, Reap The Whirlwind, Silence=Death** (*CD only).

Don Pullen (p), Gary Peacock (b), Tony Williams (d).

THE PIANO trio is one of the most enjoyable of jazz concepts: three is an ideal number for improvising; the dynamics of the music admit strength, finesse, subtlety and excitement with equal facility; and stylistic boundaries can be crossed and recrossed at will. Where solo piano can be indulgent, the trio format can edit out the worst of an overbearing pianist or lessen

the burden on his imagination. Not that any of these three pianists are short of ideas. Pullen, for example, has an abundance of inspirations, leading sometimes to a rapid catharsis: "Warriors" is rather like that. But he pays dues to form as well, which means that there's usually some underpinning motif or rhythm which keeps even his wildest steps company.

New Beginnings is an uninvigorating record. Pullen absorbs whatever he touches: a bit of flamenco rhythm in "At The Cafe" is the key to an elaborate fantasy; "Reap The Whirlwind" is freedom rushing forth, and the solo meditation of "Silence=Death" is convincingly brought to fruition. He gets a percussive, glossy sound from the keyboard, missing the range of shadings which Cecil Taylor secures, but probably sounding more 'accessible' too. Williams is too chanky for my taste: it would have been more

do – all the initiatives come from him, which seems downgrading to such players as Peacock and DeJohnette. It's amiable and enjoyable, though, in its way.

It seems conservative to pick Flanagan's record as the best of the three, but it's so delightful that we shouldn't stand on ceremony. A canny list of tunes mixes the unfamiliar – everybody knows Matt Dennis's "Angel Eyes", but "That Tired Routine" is a beauty too – with the suspiciously hackneyed, and makes it all ring clear and true. "St Louis Blues", for instance, is refurbished with special eloquence, emerging as a very sophisticated blues. Flanagan is the soul of urbanity: for J J Johnson's "Lament" he invents a wandering intro and opens for a daringly slow tempo which is finally sparked by the most graceful of glisses. "Caravan" is cleaned of its burlesque, the melody springing forth; and "Glad To Be Unhappy" is so gentle and decisively cast that you feel you're hearing a masterpiece. Mraz is as full-bodied as ever, Washington padding and brushing beside him. Of this three times three, this one's unblemished.

RICHARD COOK



GEORGE BENJAMIN, PIERRE BOULEZ,

JONATHAN HARVEY

Antara, Derive, Memoriale, Song Offerings

(Nimbus Records NI 5167)

Recorded: London, 9 May 1989 and Snape, 14–15 November 1988

Sebastian Bell (fl), Penelope Walmisley-Clark (v), London Sinfonietta cond. George Benjamin.

interesting, perhaps, if he and DeJohnette had swapped places.

Partly because DeJohnette seems to be diminished by the music on *Chanceless*: it seems odd that the drummer who might be the finest cymbal-player in today's jazz is confined mostly to patting on the toms. All the tracks here are all of a piece, sometimes programmatic – "Ecstasy" is presented as one long crescendo, and maybe they have a point. There's something remote about this music: we feel that there must be something grand and marvellous going on *inside* the music which we're not quite privy to, because outwardly the trio – who've done some fine work on their earlier ECM albums – don't seem to be doing an awful lot. Some of it falls between vamp and trance, a bit like Jarrett's mid-70s output. The pianist isn't really giving the others enough to

At 30, Benjamin has been an established figure for a decade with a string of successful works to his credit. He has a finely tuned sense of colour and timbre, and his music exhibits an enticing and refreshing 'openness'. In addition, his erudition and ebullience make him a lively commentator on that music which is dear to him (such as Messiaen), although his distastes against some of the more 'academic' schools of thought (for example integral serialism) see him indulging in rather gauche naïveté and gratuitous point-missing.

"Antara" is *Inca* for panpipe, and the sound of the panpipe family is the starting point for this piece. Through computer synthesis and sampling techniques, Benjamin transcends the limitations of the panpipe to create an impossi-

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Things, All The Things You Are,
Bernie's Tune, Almost Like Being In
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Light, The Nearness Of You, Makin'
Whoopee, Tea For Two, Fretless, Nights
At The Turntable, Lullaby Of The Leaves,
Jazz, Cherry, Swing House, Bernie's
Tune, Freeway, Soft Shoe, Walkin'
Shoes, Motel, Carson City Stage,
Foolish Motor
Bad Shank - Bud Shank Plays Tenor
I Never Knew, All The Things You Are,
Body And Soul, Blue Lou, Those Swell
Tendons, Over The Rainbow,
Long Ago And Far Away
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'Round Midnight, I'll Remember April,
Yellow Tango, Just One Of Those Things,
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ble, super-versatile, and definitely non-Andean instrument. On the whole, "Antara" is a clearly defined and enjoyable work, which benefits from repeated hearings as its highly contrasted moods and textures are rather baffling at first. Despite passages where the rousic wanders seemingly aimlessly, orientation is helped by varied reappearances of motifs and ideas which give shape to the piece. There is some lovely interplay between two flutes and the reconfigured panpipe sounds (played 'live' on computer-controlled keyboards), but all is not light and airy; there are some very threatening passages where two trombones growl angrily in their lowest register and the beating of anvils conjures up all sorts of programmatic allusions.

As for the Harvey, any assessment by the present writer is difficult owing to his aversion to the unmusical warblings which currently pass for classical singing. This is not an attack on Walmsley-Clark – virtually all singers seem compelled to adorn every note with a minor third's-worth of wobble rendering the vocal line indistinguishable and the accompaniment insalubrious. This is a shame as the eight instrumentalists seem to be playing Harvey's usual brand of rictannabulous gossamer harmonies.

The Boulez pieces make for wonderful fillers, showing that a modern composer can write light encores without sacrificing his style or integrity and come up with miniature masterpieces.

STEPHEN HOLMES

JIM HALL QUARTET ALL ACROSS THE CITY (Concord CJ-384)

Recorded: New York, May 1989

Bayo-Flor, Bemsha Swing, Young One (For Delia), R.E.M. State, All Across The City, Drop Shot, Something Tells Me, Big Bang
Gil Goldstein (ky), Jim Hall (g); Steve La Spina (b); Terry Clarke (d).

As a group record, this is perhaps too deliberately varied. There's a Latin transference, a piece of trad Monk, a touch of impressionism, a waltz done on the synthesiser's calliope button . . . and so on. There are some clever originals: "Drop Shot" pivots on a rocking bass vamp, and "Something Tells Me" (written by Jane Hall) is a subtle ballad of the sort that suits the guitarist to perfection. La Spina and

Clarke perform very well but I find Goldstein an irritation: he sounds more comfortable on the electric keyboards than the acoustic grand. As an accompanist he's decent enough, but his solos are mannered to a fault. When he throws some Monkish right hand chords into his "Bemsha Swing" solo it sounds completely artificial.

Inevitably, the man to be excepted from these criticisms is Hall himself. This would be too 'modern' a date for many players of his age, yet he even manages to insert a couple of Scofield-sounding licks into "R.E.M. State" and makes them sound plausible. "Beija-Flor" is a tune Hall found on a record given to him in Rio, and it's recast as a lovely mood piece, the melody simple and strong. Hall's apparent reluctance to take centre-stage holds the music back, for there's always more authority when



he takes charge. It's still a very agreeable record.

RICHARD COOK

THE CHADBOURNES THE EDDIE CHATTERBOX DOUBLE TRIO LOVE ALBUM (Fundamental SAVE 69)

Recorded: California, April 1988

Sword & Shield, Someday, Life X 2, Used Record Pale, Voodoo Vengeance, I Must Have Been Blind, Chase The Blues Away, The River, Blue Melody, Strange Feeling
Chadbourne (g, b, v); Bruce Ackley (ss); Jonathan Segal (vn, ky, mand); Graham Connor (p); Victor Krummenacher (b); Crispy DeLeon (d).

EUGENE CHADBOURNE
I'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE
(Fundamental SAVE 68)
Recorded: 1988

The Ring, It Takes Longer Saying Yo Than Saying No, You Still Love With Men And Dogs, The Liar Song, Too Damn Bad, Buck Owen: Medley - Big In Vegas, My Heart Sings A Beat, We Keep The KKK In Line, The Mountain Men, Oil Platform, I've Been Everywhere, Neurologically Impaired Leaders.

Chadbourne (lra, g, b, lap steel, v); David Doyle (c, parade d); Chris de Chisea (mand); Steve de Chisea (xy, banjo, bouzouki, Tom Shepherd (b); Murray Reims (perc); Legendary Steadfast Cowboy (bugle on I've Been Everywhere).

THERE'S PREJUDICE and there's prejudice, but answer me this – what kind of a narrow soundworld do you have to be living in for the *James Taylor Quartet* to be its vanguard? Seems safe to assume it's one where you'd get shown the door for mentioning De Chadbourne, the man who once ran Count Basie's "Six O'Clock Jump" into Count Five's "Psychotic Reaction" (*Vernon Of The Blues* Fundamental SAVE 18). Acid Jazz or no Acid Jazz, attempting to accommodate the Piltown Man of Free C&W Psychedelia would strain any jazz DJ's claim to inherit the "spirit of punk" . . .

Jazz makes certain demands about respect – even reverence – for tradition: it's about non-standard articulation of memory, and a particular (commodity-resistant?) relation to popular (African-American) history. Hence, of course, cover-versions and jazz standards. Hence also the incredible dislocation that Free Jazz represented. Set against punk (in many ways a direct descendant of Free), with an aesthetic of radically nihilist forgetting that insisted that the real world is born new from moment to moment, the problems of possible co-production seem insurmountable.

Chadbourne's output has shifted from pure improv through rock to its present near-populist near-comedy centre without loss of integrity and – in fact – with a certain gain of impact. He connects immediately, because country songs are simple and politically direct ("We Keep The KKK In Line", "Neurologically Impaired Leaders"); and because his play on them is in keeping with that – even as it pulls towards punk DIY-demystification and improvised unrepairability – these two LPs are as good a place to begin as any.

But the weight of what he does comes clear only after extended investment and exploration; his refusal of form, his unrepentant '60s belief in weird noise as social catalyst, in the efficacy of noise and his own hobo-guru will-to-truth.

I've Been Everywhere is essentially Eugene

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Recorded March 21, 1989 in Amiens/France

Roidinger's adroit fingering and lively resonant tone are certainly among the foremost delights on this CD; likewise, Tony Oxley's pattering rainfall of percussion, at times amazingly deft and delicate from a player renowned for the exuberant clangour he can conjure from a drumkit. As for Braxton - running the gamut of clarinet, flute, C-melody, soprano, sopranino and newly-purchased alto sax (his old one was stolen just before the tour) - the grace and rapt intensity of his playing are what we have come to expect from such a master improviser. His lines are like trails of brilliant light that dart and feint in a felicitous 3-D dance through the ever-changing contours of the sonic architecture.

The resulting music - a step back from Braxton's current multiple-logic projects, a step into virtuosic improv within "vibrational space" - rings with a relaxed exhilaration that will make it a certain pleasure for all who listen. Here, I guess (to steal an image from William Blake), is the sound of "Joy as it flies".

GRAHAM LOCK, April 1989

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with backing band, scrambling somewhere between Phil Ochs and Derek Bailey. On *Edible Chatterbox*, he re-unites with Camper Van Beethoven, a country-rock group with avant garde sympathies (and a saxophone player from ROVA) – the result's far denser, one side of warped rock fury that then dives into a second of Tim Buckley holy hippy-jazz songs.

On an earlier collaboration with CVB, Eugene programmed Syd Barrett's "Careful With That Axe Eugene" next to Pharoah Sander's "Hum Allah Hum Allah". More critical work certainly needs to be done on his cover-strategies, but for the moment let's just note that he's resolved many basic jazz/punk contradictions by exhorting tension rather than fusion. The smeary trail of his voice and the rattling wrongness of his country picking are solid beyond commodity-recuperation for years to come. This music stands!

MARK SINKER

B SHOPS FOR THE POOR THE ICEBERG PRINCIPLE (No Wave NWCD1)

Recorded, London, 1989

Enormous Of Promise; Playing Against; Wolf's Tongue; The Beaver; The Dismembered; Wilsons Shadow; A Stray Hungarian; Aloud And Straight; That Hellworn Sore; The Lowing Wisdom Of Walli; And The Tones Are Dark And Fearful; Central Chorus; The Blazing Act; Quiet New; The Fast Train.
David Petts (ts, computing); Louise Petts (as, wasp); Seve Blake (ts, ss, prepared p, wasp); John Edwards (b, el b); Sara Tyrer (v).

THE CD begins promisingly enough, well-recorded saxophones bursting with malice and energy – the band can certainly play. The hardness is attractive, and it is well achieved in a rather limited way, the general territory being art rock of the likes of Soft Machine, Art Bears, Red Crayola and Carla Bley. A driving, cynical beat, mock-pompous/dadaistic horn charts, sententious singing: no accident that they cover Brecht ("And The Times Are Dark And Fearful"). Sara Tyrer only sings on a few tracks, but like Sarah Jane Morris of The Happy End, her throaty, knowing voice puts on more world-weary sophistication than it is capable of (Poly Styrene is a better role model than Lotte Lenya for this generation): the results are a little embarrassing.

It would be nice to praise the musicians – Stephen Blake's wayward soprano does him

credit in *The Pointy Birds* – but they have been reduced to mere colouring. The composed elements are inert, repeating their eccentric shapes without any internal dynamic, brick walls on which the "our" guitar and saxes graffitied harmlessly. The improvisational elements – the chaotic, spiky guitar, the yapping saxophones – are decoratively unorthodox but no more.

You could blame it on the drum-machine, but after the achievements of the likes of Adonis and Tyrer, such talk is evidently nonsense. *The Iceberg Principle* becomes boring because it continually returns to the same level of relentless funeral mock-epic, as if modernism were a "feeling" instead of a method. Company 1989, with its strong European element, made references to Brechtian irony – one superb piece was indeed the kind of insane



cabaret B Shops are aiming for. However, it arose from concentration on the musical material. To make music more than invocation of mood, a degree of abstraction is necessary, and that is what B Shops seem to lack at present.

BEN WATSON

CAN RITE TIME

(Phonogram 838 883-1)

Recorded: Outer Space Studio, Nice, France, December 1986

On The Beautiful Side Of A Romance; The Witherless Man; Below This Lord (Patron's Song); Moven' Right Along; Like A New Child; Houdah Houdah; Gave The Drummer Some.

Malcolm Mooney (v); Jaki Liebeck (d, perc); Iman Schmidt (ky, kimble); Michael Karoli (v, org, b, g); Holger Czukay (lfn, dictaphone, syn, h)

HOLD ON, goes a German saying, we Prussians don't shoot so fast. Just so Can's first LP since they reconvened – some ten years after they ceased activity. It does not yield its pleasures easily, and anybody looking to be blown away by the kind of Totale Musik that characterised their early rushes is in for a long wait. But give it the time and you'll find it's your resistance eroding, not your patience.

Reunited with first vocalist Malcolm Mooney, with whom they recorded their debut *Monitor Movie*, the new LP *Rite Time* is seeded with that shocking debut's flaws – an improvising R'n'B singer at a loss for words and resorting to gibberish to fill the pauses. Yet, for better and for worse. Can take their cues from his vocal melodies, embellishing and only very slowly advancing them through the timbral changes the various instrumentalists ring to tunes by generously trading each other's roles. Side One largely sounds like a group working its way back into each other's wave patterns. Songs don't so much cohere as accrete under the weight of increasing ornamentation. Here, Mooney's the perfect host keeping the conversation rolling (just) until the others loosen their inhibitions and decide that reopening the Can case was not such a bad idea after all.

Indeed, one track alone, "Like A New Child" opening Side Two, justifies their return. Every bit as lovely as the lengthy workouts on *Sasin Over Babylon* and *Future Days*, it's a cold and splendid timescape shaped by the bizarre interplay of Iman Schmidt's glacial flows and Michael Karoli's hearseeking African guitar patterns. Their only non-Can works to match it are the Schmidt-Spoerri collaboration *Tey Planet* and Czukay's "Massenmedium". After that you'll indulge them anyway.

If Can are not shooting so fast, their aim – their line of faith – remains true, and the bullet with your name on it catches you up in the end.

BIBA KOPF

WACHSMANN, JACOBSEN, BRIGHTON, MATTOY, TAYLOR ELEVEN YEARS FROM YESTERDAY (Beat CD01/FMR CD02-011988)

Recorded: London, October 1988

Soul Bealoud; One Sombre Beat Her Head (sic); Down the Shimmering Torrents; Fall of Purple Stars; And Peacefully: The Last Branch Sank On To Her Pappy From Silver Cloud

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closely to these latest findings from the
man who is, apart from anything else,
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pianists." Jonathan Coe - Wire,
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FAST LICKS

*This month's quick quips
by quizmaster Tom Corbin*

FREE IMPROVISATION has always delighted in and been blighted by an inability to apprehend the nature of its own future. As a music which is tied in its immediate genesis to the here-and-now, the notion of a there-and-then has traditionally been denied, if tacitly, by many of its practitioners. After freedom, what else is there except more freedom?

This recording points to the two very old-fashioned virtues of discipline and patience as one possible solution. The musicians, none of whom are exactly strangers to their audience or to each other, have assimilated and refined their collective experience and understanding of improvisation to the extent that the group can honestly and genuinely choose what to play and what not to play. This analysis may sound banal, but it bears comparison of one definition of sexual freedom that's been around at least as long as this group: the freedom to share a bed out of convenience with a plausible sexual partner, and to choose to go to sleep.

No sleeping on this here record, though. From this base of creative self-assurance the music moves through a vast range of expressive modes. Phil Wachsmann has long since taken on board the judicious use of melody and gently repetitive figures which he occasionally offers as a frame for the other players; Brighton's relationship with his guitar seems as ambivalent as ever; Mattos's sensitive responsiveness has rarely been better displayed; Jacobsen and Taylor marshal considerable instrumental resources but use them with a superb restraint and selectivity. The whole adds up to one of the most uplifting albums of free music I've heard this year.

The dual catalogue number? Thereby hangs an interesting tale. FMR is an offshoot of Future Music, an instruments-and-related-technology chain of retail outlets. Nice to see this end of the business ploughing some money into such a venture, instead of leaving this kind of initiative to the musicians themselves or to the occasional specialist record shop. This CD, together with Tiro Garland's *Points On The Curve* CD reviewed last month, can be obtained from FMR, 18 Baddow Road, Chelmsford, Essex. Tel: 0245 352490.

TOM CORBIN

VLADIMIR ESTRAGON: *THREE QUARKS FOR MUSTER MARK* (Tiptoe CD 888 803). Phil Manton's voice and trumpet teams with Alfred 23 Harth's reeds, Ulrike Haage's keyboards/sequencers/samples and F M Einheit's percussion and noise. The results are 17 short pieces which gallop through European chamber music, tech-wreck quasi-improvisation and cyberpunk jazz which makes John Zorn sound painstakingly laborious. Collapsing new buildings made of musique concrete. A high-powered and compelling demonstration of



musical de-architecture which I'd dearly love to experience live, soon, somebody, please

JOHN ABERCROMBIE/GEORGE MARSH/MEL GRAVES: *UPON A TIME* (New Albion NA 020 CD). A duets album: ten tracks of guitar/mandolin, guitar/piano and drums/percussion, six of drums and basses. Abercrombie delights in taking apparently banal guitar riffs and turning them into captivating melodic reinventions, filling out his duets with Marsh with some of the most discriminate and judicious use of guitar technology I've heard of late. The bass/drums duets are marginally less successful, the music occasionally disappearing up its own mood of restrained introspection, but the whole is both vibrant and meticulous without being simply fussy. New Albion have

mercifully transcended their New Ageiness with this and their recent Pauline Oliveros album and are without doubt a label to watch — particularly if you work for ECM.

PHILIP CATHERINE: *TRANSPARENCY* (Inak 8701). One of the best examples of this guitarist's work. PC plus a rhythm section who keep him firmly in sight on this two-tracks, no-overdubs set plus guest keyboard players walk the dangerous line between the limpid and the merely limp and emerge victorious. Gentle blues, gritty pastorals and introspective dance music all conspire to make a good-humoured nonsense of the relationship between style and emotional response, and, as usual, Catherine's virtuosity is almost casual.

PIERRE MOERLEN'S GONG: *SECOND WIND* (Linn LINC 9.00698). As those who were more-or-less alive at the time will know, the bombardment of flying teapots has long since ceased. Having said that, this isn't Bambooni-ness either, Moerlen has hauled the happy happy entry called Gong relentlessly into their present incarnation as a kind of part-Old part-New Fusion band based on, unsurprisingly, the tuned percussion with which Moerlen has been entrancing rock fans with nice sweaters for the past few years as sideman to the likes of Mike Oldfield. The result is a genuinely sophisticated music, in which shifting, near-repetitive interlocking melodic lines latch tightly onto no-nonsense rhythmic figures and move up and away. Brisk and cheering.

ENRICO RAVA QUARTET: *ANIMALS* (Inak 8801 CD). Latin-fusion without keyboards or percussion other than kit drums was a nice idea when this recording was made two years ago, and still is. Rava's direct, unfussy trumpet style doesn't rush in to fill the gaps deliberately left by his guitar/bass/drums backing, resulting in a well-ventilated and lively set that strolls from its primary territory into ballads and blues with guileless ease.

BILLY COBBHAM'S GLASS MENAGERIE: *STRAYUS* (Inak 813CD). One of Inak's CD reissue series, and less improbable than some ('Pete York presents Spencer Davis & Colin Hodg-

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Forward Music gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Whitman Foundation and the Musicians' Union in promoting these concerts.

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Loi Conhill are: Hobbs
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Michael Newman: viola
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Barney Childs
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kinson"). The usual Cobham jackhammer backbeat and clobbering tom-toms evoke happy memories for everyone who was there for his Cannes concert a while back. Presumably, The rest of us either enjoy his good-time boogaloo funk or not, but there's a decided shift in the wind when his sidemen get to slip in the odd tune. In fact the most interesting track on this offering is Michael Urbaniak's "Kasia" which diverts the band into a kind of tech-folk idiom.

DIERRE PETIT: SORCIER (Leo CD LR 301). French cellist gets about exploring the inner-most characteristics of his instrument – traditionally one of the most expressive of Western string instruments – in an unaccompanied setting. Unfortunately he doesn't seem to discover much that hasn't already been discovered by Holland, Maeros, Hoesinger, Cora etc. What he does discover he flogs to death

before moving on to another idea – this is some of the most overtly linear improvisation I've heard. I would invoke Barthes and his notion of musica practica at this point, but if it'd only be playing into Petit's obviously capable but sadly uninspired hands. The recording also sounds as if it was made on a dictaphone

EARL HINES/BUD JOHNSON (Black & Blue 233084 CD). One of a clutch of excellent CD reissues from Black & Blue. This particular recording dates from 1974, and adds two previously unreleased tracks to the originals, one of which is a splendidly bouncy rendering of "Just In Time" which should never have escaped release in the first place. Hines and Johnson strike endless inventive sparks off each other and the rhythm section and the hour flies by much too quickly. "Does anybody wanna buy some blues?" comes the cry on the opening "Blues For Sale". Damn right.

LORENCE BARBER: LINGUA-FRANCA-CAMPANOLOGY (Mains Nova CD 1). Amiable-looking old hippy builds portable belltower, travels widely giving recitals on same and finds himself at the church of St Andrew's by the Wardrobe, London EC4 at some aptly ungodly hour of the morning recording three lengthy/timeless improvisations for this new label, on which more in a moment. Despite the airy-fairy sleeve notes the whole recording is founded on an impressive musical intuition which not only embodies much careful use of improvisational insight but which shows up much supposedly meditative music for the undisciplined slush it really is. Ear your heart out, Matthew Manning. This CD plus much else (the catalogue includes work by Dillon, Finnis, Feldman, Skempton, Harvey, Peter Maxwell Davies etc, etc, which MN either issue or distribute) can be obtained from Musica Nova, 72 Mornington Road, London E11 3BG. Tel. 01-556-5818.



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– The Observer Sept 89



POOR OLD BLOKE WRITES

THANKS FOR the interview and reference to Jeff Nuttall's book *The Bald Soprano* in the September issue. Much appreciated. Let's hope that it will do me a bit of good. Thanks Ben. Lucy and I have both recovered.

I don't want to comment on the article in general, but I would like to correct any misunderstandings that might arise from quotes within the closing paragraphs.

1. ('In fact we did a horror soundtrack album Nato won't release...') Nato have not refused to release the recording, but are hoping to complete the film which the music relates to for a simultaneous release. However, without the film, the recording might be shelved, or partially remixed with other material added.

2. ('It's great. It's got bones rattling,' says Lucy.) Lucy is very knowledgeable on the subject of 'horror' sound-tracks. She even likes the music/sound in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* when there are no bones rattling, whether it sounds like The Recedents or not. Within most, if not all, horror movies there are sections of conventional music. The juxtapositions and sudden changes in the situational music in horror films, with or without vision, often prove to be interesting on several different levels. There are also, of course, many bad films with good music and good films with bad music, though there are a few that are just dreadful overall.

Right! That's it then, apart from reminding Melody Four aficionados that Steve Beresford, Tony Coe and I continue to occasionally work together. We have recently released parts 1 & 2 of *Shopping For Melodies* (10 inch LP) and together on CD. Unfortunately, Chabada Records are still difficult to find in this country, but at least anyone reading this will know that they exist.

Must dash. I have to audition for a film part as some poor old bloke who's a bit out of it. I was recommended by an intimate friend. Oh,

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TURN IT UP!

WHAT GREAT news that David Lee is planning unlimited hours of modern jazz on LJR. However, it seems that living down here in the sticks we are once again going to miss out. The one redeeming feature may be that although I live in Dover I work in Maidstone – so maybe I'll have an hour's enjoyment during lunch-break.

DAVID BRIVIO, Dover

For sheer dedication, David, you win this month's bottle of Haig! – Ed.

by the way, I didn't really seduce Nuttall's girl-friend.

LOL COXHILL, London

THIS WE DUG OF THEM

I READ and enjoyed your appraisal of the Blue Note label (*Wire* 66). I have a record collection (about 150) acquired over nearly 30 years. This includes originals from the 60s, with blue and white labels; scattered releases from the early 70s with blue labels; a clump of Japanese imports from the late 70s and early 80s. These are exact copies of the originals and are of superb quality and of course many French releases which are current.

Why all the Mobley, Blakey, Morgan and Silver records? After all, their output was predictable and routine. Well, for a start, most music of whatever flavour is predictable and routine. What Blue Note musicians produced consistently was a level of professionalism unmatched by any other jazz label. I recall George Coleman explaining details of Herbie Hancock's *Maiden Voyage* date. It seems that Tony Williams wasn't booked for the date, and was only called in when it was decided that the session didn't "feel right". (Stu Martin was the original booking.)

No matter the names on the cover, whoever the leaders, you always felt you were listening to a 'working group'. Someone once said "the difference between Blue Note and Prestige is two days of rehearsal".

Sound quality must be mentioned and tribute paid to Rudy Van Gelder, surely the greatest of jazz recording engineers. The only criticism one could make of Rudy was that he made some musicians sound tonally slightly different. So what? Hank Mobley and Joe Henderson are great either way.

How about the sleeve cover work by Francis Wolfe and Reid Miles? How could any music which came out of one of their covers sound bad? Well, unfortunately, towards the end of the era a lot of the music did. I still bought some of it to find out.

My favourite Blue Note period was from 1955–1966 and from this period I have many examples of routine, predictable works of art, which I enjoy as much today as I did then. There is much post-bop music being produced in the 80s by young musicians, most of which is very enjoyable but none of it is doing anything other than what Blue Note regulars were doing 25 years ago.

I shall now take myself off to buy Ralph Moore's new album. I wonder what he'll make of Mobley's "This I Dig Of You" and Henderson's "Punjabi". I'm sure I already know. Oh happy days.

IAN WHITTAKER, East Kilbride

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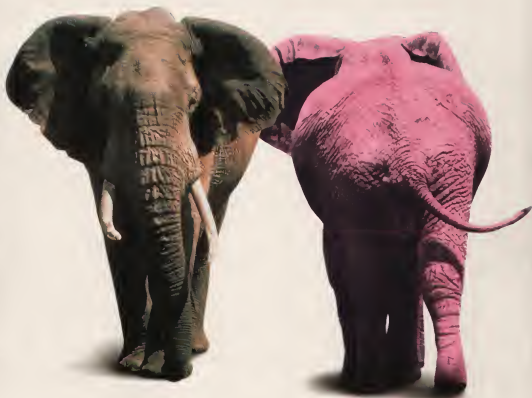
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